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Bilvavi 4: Chapter 10: The Inner Point of Avodas Hashem

Our Focus In Learning

We spoke in the previous chapter about *temimus*. We will now try to expand upon this topic and draw the concept closer to our hearts.

When a person sits down to learn, usually his first thought is, "Please, Hashem, give me the understanding in order to know the Torah."

But the truth is that this has to be the *second* thought that comes to mind, not the *first*. The first thought one needs to have is that he is sitting down to learn Torah because this is the will of Hashem; and since Hashem wants one to understand the Torah, one tries to understand it. Hashem might want from a person that he shouldn't understand it. One should thus say it verbally and with a full heart that he is prepared to accept it if he won't understand a thing.

Thus, our main focus when we learn should not only be about if we understand it or not, but also on fulfilling the will of Hashem that we try to understand his Torah. When our intellect is disconnected from our feelings, the intellect then stands by itself, and it is rooted in the sin of Adam when he desired the *eitz hadaas* out of a desire for knowledge. If a person is using his mind and directing it toward what Hashem wants from him, then his mind is attached to the Creator, and such intellect is pure. It becomes a mind that is attached to the *kedushah* of the Torah and not just to the wisdom of Torah.

The more a person learns *lishmah*^[1] - when he is concerned about doing the will of Hashem, and not out of a personal desire for knowledge - the closer he is to the inner point of the Torah, to the soul of the Torah.

Serving Hashem, But Not For Ourselves

We do not mean that we don't have to try to understand Torah. We must try to understand it, but we must know that the reason why we learn Torah is only to carry out His will. We need to show Hashem that we are searching for Him. The intellectual aspect in our learning is a garment over our inner mission, and our inner mission indeed needs to be expressed to us through our intellect.

If a person hears of a way for how to serve *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, and he is only searching to uncover his own unique way, without a desire to do His will – in simple words, he is serving himself, not *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*! He’s searching for himself! Some people are searching to find themselves in physical pleasure, while others are searching to find Hashem. But you can also have a person who is searching for himself when it comes to spirituality, and his interest is not necessarily about finding Hashem.

This is a dangerous mindset to have. When a person is caught up in physical pursuits, at least he might wake up and see that his actions are distancing him from the Creator. But if a person is immersed in *ruchniyus* all the time and he’s merely searching to find himself, he might never realize his entire life, *chas v’shalom*, that he is really far from the truth. He might imagine all his life that he serves the Creator, while the truth is that he’s serving himself – he’s only concerned for his own perfection, and he doesn’t yearn to fulfill the will of Hashem.

Chazal teach us (Yoma 72b) that if a person merits, his Torah learning will become like an elixir of life to him, but if he doesn’t merit, the Torah will become like poison to him (may Hashem have mercy). When a person learns Torah, or when a person is involved with serving Hashem in any area, it might all become to him like poison one day – *chas v’shalom*. If someone learns Torah *lishmah*, then he merits that the “Torah raises him and exalts him over all actions”. But it is also possible that a person will only be elevated all for himself, and this resembles the evil nation of Amalek, who is called *rom*, “exalted.” A person has to look for the right kind of exultation – the G-dly kind of exultation, and not to exalt himself.

If a person only pursues a matter (in learning Torah or in any area of Avodas Hashem) only intellectually and not out of a desire to search for the Creator, he only receives the external layer of the matter, and he is missing the inner, underlying point of a matter.

If a person is truly searching for spirituality, he is ultimately searching for his soul. If he really wants to reveal his soul, he needs to understand what the soul is and how to search for it. If this search is being done only for a person to find himself, this itself holds back his soul from being revealed.

People mistakenly think that as long as a person leaves physical pursuit and enters the world of spirituality, that this is everything one needs to do. This is wrong, because not all spirituality is necessarily the *right* kind of spirituality; it might all be like a subtle form of darkness that comes upon a person. In Egypt, by the plague of darkness, what was light for a Jew was dark for an Egyptian. This shows us that what is a spiritual light for one person might be a spiritual darkness to another person. We don’t mean physical darkness – we mean spiritual darkness.

If a person searches for Hashem, then of him it is written, “*As I sit in darkness, Hashem is a light to me.*” (Michah 7:8). The only light that a person has is from Hashem’s light. But if someone is into *ruchniyus* just for its own sake - without Hashem in the picture - he will be in darkness. Spiritual darkness is also called *hester panim*, the concealment of Hashem’s radiance. It is a double kind of darkness, because the person thinks that he’s with the truth, while he’s really very far from Hashem.

If a person approaches learning with “*I need to understand*”, he’s already holding himself back from truly understanding the Torah, without realizing it.

Dedicating Your Learning

The Arizal writes that before davening, one should say that he is accepting upon himself the mitzvah to love all Jews. This is because if a person really wants to connect to Hashem, he needs to integrate with the Jewish people, because a person cannot find Hashem on his own. He cannot be all about his

ego.

The Chasam Sofer said that a person has to give away *maaser* (a tenth) of his *ruchniyus* for others. This does not only mean that one has to go out and influence others. Even as a person is sitting alone in the *beis midrash*, he should know that a Jew is never alone, because Hashem is always next to him, as well as all the souls of the Jewish people, who are one with Hashem.

Thus, it is proper that before a person begins to learn, he should decide that he is giving away ten percent of his learning for other Jews. If a person isn't prepared to give up a tenth of his Gan Eden for others, he's for sure only interested in his own gains. A person has to worry for others, though, both when it comes to their physical needs as well as their spiritual needs.

This is a fundamental, basic point: one should stop thinking only about himself, even as he's sitting and learning, and remember that he's only learning to give a *nachas ruach* to Hashem. This is the meaning of what is written, "Give strength to G-d." A Jew has the power to "give" something to the Above. But if a person lives only for himself, then he is far from the goal of his soul.

In order to attain this, a person needs to cry and beg Hashem for this, that He purify his heart and merit him to realize the point of *lishmah*, at all times.

Bilvavi 4: Chapter 11 *The Essence of the Soul Is Temimus*

Beyond Inspiration

There are words we hear which are inspiring, but they are merely just that – inspiration. Then there are words which go beyond 'inspiration' – they are about life. They are matters of the soul.

When a person gets *chizuk* (inspiration) from something he hears, this is of course wonderful, but it is still not yet all there is to life. There is a certain direction which we should be trying to be heading towards, and inspiration alone will not get us there. The point of the inspiration is to get us to believe the words we are hearing on a very simple level, to just hear them as they are. Superficiality – and even inspiration, which can also be superficial – cheapens the worth of the words we hear.

Reb Pinchos Koritzer, a student of the Baal Shem Tov, would speak in a very low voice whenever he would lecture to the public, and it was hard for the people around him to hear what he was saying. When people would come eagerly closer so they could listen to hear his words, he would say that this was not commendable. Why? He explained that if a person is supposed to hear something, he will hear it wherever he is, and if he's not supposed to hear it, then even if he stands very close within earshot, he will not absorb what is being said anyway.

In order for a person to hear the truth in what he hears, he has to come with *peshitus* (simplicity) and *temimus* (wholesomeness). The main point is not the words that one hears, but the simplicity that he can reach through them.

Better To Be Simple Than To Be Cunning

The Snake was the first person in history to deviate from *temimus* and to act cunning with its

cleverness; it represents the root of *armimus*, “cleverness”, which is the opposite of *temimus*. Although we find a holy kind of being clever (*pikc’hus*), we must know when we should use our power to be clever and when not to. Even when we have to act cunning, we must still always remember that our soul by essence, according to how Hashem created us, is to act with *temimus*. *Temimus* is actually the innermost point of our soul. If we have to act cunning ever, we should look at it as a “garment” which we need to put on sometimes, but not that it is our essence. Our essence has to be “*You shall be wholehearted with Hashem your G-d.*”

The more a person is a *tamim* (wholesome), the more he is “with Hashem.” The further he is away from *temimus*, the further he is from Hashem. In order for a person to really reach closeness to Hashem, he has to remove his analytical thinking a bit and just have a very simple attitude towards Hashem.

It is written, “*G-d made man upright (yoshor), but they seek many calculations (cheshbonos rabim).*”^[2] By nature, Hashem made us to be “*yoshor*” - to be very “straight” and simple, rather than to be sharp, clever and cunning.

Korach was called a “*pikeach*”, a “clever” person. Yet, his very cleverness brought him to sin. If he only would have had *temimus* and to accept that Moshe Rabbeinu is the prophet that Hashem chose, he never would have come to sin.

If a person remains with his *cheshbonos rabim*, he is far from being *yoshor*. The Baal Shem Tov said that even after all the comprehension he merited, his main task was to just be, “*And a righteous person lives by his faith.*”

The Gemara^[3] says, “Why do we blow shofar on Rosh Hashanah? Because the Merciful One said we should blow!”

The only thought we need to calculate before we do something is: what does Hashem want? We don’t need to know the reasons why we do something; what we need is one *cheshbon* (calculation) alone – “*What Hashem, your G-d, asks of you.*” That is the only *cheshbon* we should be making.

Bargaining Ruins Our Temimus

Hashem gave us the ability of *pilpul* (sharp, analytical thinking when we learn Gemara), but we need to only use it when we learn Torah, and not when it comes to how we deal with worldly matters.

One time the Kotzker Rebbe zt”l saw someone bargaining with a saleslady to give him a cheaper price for what he was buying. The Kotzker told him, “You are forgetting the words of the *Mishna*: Do not speak so much with a woman.”

Besides for the *mussar* that the Kotzker Rebbe gave this person, there is a deeper point contained here as well: the fact that he was bargaining with her increases his ability of cleverness and holds back his *temimus*. *Temimus* would be that he is accepting what the price is and not making this calculation and that calculation.

Of course, there are no rules when it comes to this. But our point is that if the person was born with a natural ability to bargain with others – even when the price is a normal price, he still likes to bargain for a better price – then if he always goes like this, he is losing *temimus*.

When a person lives with Hashem in his life – when he lives with Him with *temimus* – then when he hears the price of the item, he knows that this is the price which Hashem wants him to pay, and if Hashem would have wanted him to pay less, he would hear a lower price.

We have only given an example, but we must know that this concept applies to all of our life, and to each person. The more *temimus* a person has, the stronger his *emunah* is; he believes that everything which comes to him is not by chance, but very well planned by Hashem. He realizes that when he is purchasing an item in a store, he's not buying it from the storeowner, but from Hashem!

Lying

Let us give another example of *temimus*. Sometimes a person sees that two of his friends are fighting, so he tries to patch up the situation between them by lying to them about each other, that the other wants to make up; he relies on the words of Chazal, that "it is permitted to lie for the sake of peace."

However, one must know that this advice of Chazal is very dangerous for a person to use if he hasn't purified himself well. The Baal Shem Tov said that only one who has never lied his entire life can use this allowance, but if someone lied even once, he is not allowed to lie even for the sake of peace. He has already tainted himself by lying *shelo lishmah* (for ulterior motivations) and thus even when it comes to lie when it is *lishmah*, his *shelo lishmah* will be mixed in.

In other words, it's possible that a person feels that he is lying *lishmah*, but deep down in his soul, he has become used to being cunning with his lying; and he will fool himself that it's necessary sometimes to lie.

By having *emunah* in Hashem, a person will be much more successful than if he chooses the other way, which is to go with his own cleverness.

Temimus Is Our Essence

From a simple, superficial perspective, it seems that we are addressing just another aspect in our Avodas Hashem here - albeit an important one, something worth our attention; but that it is just one of the many other details we need to work on...

But if someone is already living in the inner world - or he as at least purified himself somewhat - he understands that *temimus* is what the soul is full of. Any form of lying goes against *temimus*. The more a person feels his inner world, the more he recoils from falsity and trickery, and he yearns instead for pure simplicity.

When a person doesn't feel his soul, it is very difficult for him to feel how falsity conceals his soul from him.

Bitachon

Before, we brought the possuk in Koheles, "*G-d made man upright, but they seek many calculations.*" The first thing a person is doing wrong by having *cheshbonos rabim* is that he is having "many" calculations, when instead he should only be having one goal in mind (which we will say). The second thing the person is doing wrong is the mere fact that he is making *cheshbonos*; he shouldn't be making *chesbonos* in the first place.

We need to come out of our "*cheshbonos rabim*" we make and instead have no *cheshbonos*.

By nature, a person is always thinking (more or less). There is constant worrying in a person's life. What is the solution to our worries? *Bitachon* - to trust in Hashem. What is *Bitachon*?

Bitachon is that a person sees that his livelihood won't come to him naturally, and so he must believe

that everything is from Hashem; he will only get what he is supposed to get from Hashem, and there are no rules.

Usually, people only make use of *Bitachon* when they realize that they have no choice. The person is stuck, he sees no way out of his situation, so he has no choice other than to believe that his salvation will come from Hashem.

However, there is a deeper point about *Bitachon*: that a person *shouldn't think at all* about his situation. We do not mean to be lethargic, but rather, because the soul can be so connected to *temimus* that no thoughts at all about one's income even enter his mind. Of course, to live like this all the time is a very high level, but we have to at least try to get close to this.

Once the Brisker Rov told the Chazon Ish that he has *Bitachon*. The Chazon Ish told the people there escorting him, "When the Brisker Rov says he has *Bitachon*, it doesn't mean that he believes everything will be for the best. It means that he's not even thinking it will be a problem!"

How did he come to this level? When a person lives in *temimus* with the Creator, his soul is always fulfilling the *possuk*, "*And you shall be wholehearted with Hashem your G-d*", and it will be hard for him to leave that state and think about his *cheshbonos rabim*.

Someone who is always involved in his *cheshbonos rabim*, however, will see these words and think that they are all lofty, Heavenly matters. The reason for this is because he has entered so far into his *cheshbonos rabim* - *cheshbon* after *cheshbon* - and he has become so enmeshed in them that all his deeds are directed by them.

It is more important for a person to sit in solitude and reflect on the point of *temimus*, "*And you shall be wholehearted with Hashem your G-d*", rather than placing so much effort on how he will make a living.

This *Avodah* differs with each person, depending on the level he is at. How much time should one spend on making a living and thinking about it, and how much time should one spend improving his *temimus* and *bitachon*? Each person needs a different amount of time for each of these areas. However, there is no doubt that the main focus of a person should be on how much *temimus* to have, and not on how much effort he needs to have. Efforts to make a living are accomplished by our body, but our *soul* needs to be focused on the right place - connected with Hashem, through a yearning and a desire for Him.

Temimus Solves Self-Consciousness

Hashem created in a person a *middah* called *bushah*, shame. What is the root of feeling embarrassed?

Before Adam sinned, Adam and Chavah "were not embarrassed" to be without garments. Only after the sin did shame enter them, and they immediately covered themselves with fig branches.

Why was there no shame before the sin? It is because shame gets created when a person thinks, "What are others thinking about me? What are they saying about me?" But when a person lives in *temimus* with the Creator, he never gets such thoughts. It's not that he has elephant skin and that he's insensitive to insults. It is just that his soul does not identify with such triviality.

"*And because of our sins, we were exiled from our land, and we were distanced from our earth, and we cannot ascend and appear before You.*" Our distance from the Creator got created through sin. It

appears to a person as if Hashem is distance from him, and sometimes a person even gives up from ever attaining closeness to Him.

But we must know what the possuk says, “*For the matter is very close to you, it is in your mouth and heart to do it.*” If a person gets used to using “*your mouth*” all the time to talk about *emunah*, to talk about *temimus*, to talk about *peshitus* – he will be able to reach “*your heart*”, and from there he will be able to come “*to do it.*” But if a person all day is thinking about all kinds of clever thoughts that are superficial, it will be very hard for him to reach *temimus* and *emunah peshutah*.

May Hashem help us that we remove the *cheshbonos rabim* and instead live a life of *temimus* with the Creator.

[1] The topic of “*lishmah*” will be further discussed in the sixth volume of *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*.

[2] *Koheles 7: 29*

[3] *Rosh HaShanah 16a*

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