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בלבבי על מסילת ישרים (ח"ד) - עמ' כג - כח

The *Mesillas Yesharim* (in Chapter 16, "The Trait of Taharah\Purity") writes that a person should only turn to Hashem, and to no one else; this is what Dovid HaMelech means in Tehillim (73:25), "*Who else do I have in Heaven? And when I am with you, I do not desire this earth.*"

The Ramchal is telling us that when a person wants to be on the level of *Taharah* [spiritual purity] - he should only turn to Hashem, and to no one else.

After a person dies, when his soul leaves his body, his immediate desire is to see his parents, whom he hasn't seen in such a long time. There are people who die with a list full of questions that they are waiting to ask in Heaven - their souls immediately go straight to the Heavenly school (*mesivta d'rakia*) so that they can ask questions on the sefarim to the authors who wrote them. This sounds like a nice thing, but the possuk says differently: "*Who else do I have in Heaven.*" In other words - the only one we should be seeking in Heaven is Hashem Himself! There is no one else whom we should be concerned with.

This is a very subtle and deep perception of our soul. It's not enough for a person to overcome his desire to be honored by others. It goes even more than that; a person has to learn that he doesn't need to turn to anyone else, other than Hashem.

Imagine if a person is told that he will live for 100 years and be alone, with no one to talk to. How would he feel? Chazal say, "Either a friend or death" (*Taanis 23a*). Yet, Chazal also tell us that Hashem is our Friend, whom we should never abandon (See *Rashi to Shabbos 31a*). We definitely need companionship, but who says that companionship has to be another human being...

This is really an understanding that goes above human intellect. The very essence of a human being seeks companionship, and the fact that we are clothed by a physical body makes this need even stronger. We seek to be connected to others.

This need came about through Adam, who requested from Hashem that he needs a companion. Hashem indeed answered his request, and gave him a wife. Why didn't Hashem just create her originally? Why did Adam have to first be alone?

The answer is: In the pure, initial state of mankind, man already has a companion. Hashem Himself is his companion. Adam was aware of this, but he asked Hashem that he needs a physical companion on this earth; he wanted to be connected with people. This was actually the root of his sin. The very

woman that he asked for was the one who caused damage to him, convincing him to eat from the forbidden tree. The first sin in Creation did not start with eating from the forbidden tree – it started from Adam’s deviation from his companionship with Hashem.

In our pure state, we did not to be connected with other human beings. Adam was created alone. This was not a deficiency – it was intended. It was the original plan of Creation. Hashem wanted only one man on this world, as a vessel that would contain His individuality. In the original design, there was no need for human companionship.

When a person isn’t totally connected with the Creator, he needs to fill this void of disconnection. He understands that animals are not his companion, so he seeks other people for companionship.

The *mitzvah* to love other Jews only came into concept as a result of Adam’s sin. After the first sin, disparity entered the fabric of Creation, and now the Torah as well contains disparity, so we are commanded to unify the disparities. Had Adam never felt any need to unify with others in the first place – understanding that only Hashem is the Friend to have – he wouldn’t have had to need other human beings, because there would be no one else on the world to unify with.

The very fact that we must love others is all a result of the disparity that entered Creation, as a result of the first sin. After the sin, it became possible to have separation in the world, and now there are people who start out apart from each other, and they must unify with each other and become one again. But in the original design of mankind, we were not intended to have human companionship. There were angels in Gan Eden who served Adam, but these were not friends to him, because he did not learn Torah from them. Before the sin, Adam learned Torah directly from Hashem. Hashem was, so to speak, the *chavrusa* (learning partner) of Adam, and Adam’s sole connection was with Hashem alone.

Sin caused us to feel that we cannot feel satisfaction on this world from just being connected to Hashem. It made us feel that even if we are close with Hashem, we need a companion on this earth. “Either a friend or death.” But this is not the intended state of Creation.

The trait of *Taharah* (Purity) is for a person to serve Hashem *lishmah*, “for Hashem’s sake”. It is essentially for a person to have *bittul ani*, to nullify his sense of “I”. When a person is at the lower stage of his *avodah* – *shelo lishmah* (he serves Hashem for various kinds of ulterior motives), then he is concerned mainly about himself. But when a person reaches *lishmah*, he nullifies his existence, and he does not think and worry about himself.

When a person nullifies his “I”, he can come to feel as Dovid HaMelech is describing: “*Who else do I have in Heaven? And when I am with you, I have no desire for this earth.*” A person cannot reach this understanding unless he penetrates into the deepest part of himself, which is the state of before Adam’s request for a companion; he will need to seek human companionship.

When a person never gets to this understanding inside himself, he will go to Heaven after he dies and he might even get to visit all the Heavenly schools, and he might even get to learn in the school of Hashem Himself, but he won’t last in any of these schools! He’ll seek a different place than the one he is in...

A person might wonder: What do you mean! If I get to learn in Hashem’s school in Heaven, would I even entertain the notion of leaving it?!

But think about it. Why are there schools in Heaven in the first place? Hashem’s school is the one that contains the entire Torah. So why are there are other schools in Heaven besides for Hashem’s?!

The simple response to this is that if someone doesn't merit to get into Hashem's school, he can at least get into the other schools. But the depth of this matter is as follows: Even if a person merits to get into Hashem's school, it's not enough for him – because he still needs companionship; when he left this world, he remained with the same understanding of after the sin, in which people need companionship. That's why he needs other schools in Heaven!

"Who else do I have in Heaven. And when I am with you, I do not desire this earth." This is describing a deep understanding of the soul, in which the person realizes that he only needs to seek Hashem, and no one else; he has no will whatsoever to seek out others for companionship.

The words here do not mean to imply that no one is on this level. We all have this ability in our souls, but it is a hidden kind of understanding, contained in the depths of our soul. It is our avodah to reveal this inner place of understanding in our soul: to only turn to Hashem.

In order to reach this inner place of the soul, a person has to develop a lifestyle of solitude.

If a person is bogged down – whether it's from mundane life, or even from spiritual matters, he can't get to this inner place. If a person is very involved with the public scene and does so earnestly, feeling a deep need in his soul to be involved with the public – he won't be able to reach this inner solitude. This is true even if a person is reserved from others and he only feels mentally connected with others. How much more so does it apply when a person is actively involved with the public. A person like this won't be able to get to the understanding that all he needs in his life is Hashem, because he has never gotten used to the idea of ever being alone from people.

There is a kind of life of solitude that exists, and it is contained in the depths of our soul. The first step in reaching this is to first disconnect from society, simply, in the physical sense. After that comes the second step, which is mentally disconnect from others and feel totally alone in your soul with Hashem. It is then that a person will find his true Friend.

The kind of life which we see in the world today is totally the opposite of the true way that life is supposed to look like, the kind of life that Chazal speak of. It is being mentioned here in this chapter of *Mesillas Yesharim*. It is the way of life which our holy forefathers lived like. Our great Avos were shepherds in the desert, and they lived in solitude.

Our Avos did not do this out of self-centeredness, *chas v'shalom*. They were able to be personable with others, besides for having solitude. This was because they viewed dealings with other people as a garment that covers over our soul, which they would "wear" sometimes when they had to deal with people. They viewed relationships with others as a *garment*, and not as an intrinsic part of their essence.

When a person understands that "Either a friend or death" simply, that he can't be happy in life unless he has friends, then he views companionship as part of his essence, not as a garment. He is missing the deep understanding. The deep understanding to have is that relationships with others are merely a garment that we have to sometimes wear, and sometimes remove.

The Mesillas Yesharim continues: "Similarly, Dovid HaMelech says: *"Your word is very pure, and Your servant loves it."*

The words of Hashem are pure. Hashem created the world with Ten Utterances, and all that resulted

from it was pure.

If a person wants to connect to the Creator, he must reveal from within himself a deep place in his soul: a point which is completely good and pure.

After Adam's sin, good and evil became mixed together, and mankind fell from his pure state. Before the sin, Adam resembled the Creator, in that he was completely good. Now that evil entered him and became mixed with his good, man no longer resembles the Creator, Who is completely good [and it is our avodah to return to that state of complete good].

So if a person wants to reach the inner understanding that he only needs Hashem and no one else, he must reach the place of "Your word is pure, and Your servant loves it." He must reveal a place in himself which is completely good.

When a person hears of this concept, he might react: "What are we supposed to do - become disconnected from reality?!"

But the truth is that there is a very healthy and good way of disconnecting from reality! [But it's only if a person can immediately return from solitude to reality in the blink of an eye]. It is a necessity to disconnect from reality - in a healthy way. If a person can't do it, he's burying himself in this world of falsity.

"Your word is pure, and Your servant loves it." This is describing a deep yearning of the soul for a place that is completely clean, completely good, in which there is no evil. Although we can see that there is no such clean place that exists on this physical world, of this we can say: "I wait for him every day." We await Moshiach, but the point is not to await the person who will be Moshiach. It is rather a yearning for a world that is completely pure and holy.

The more a person sees how there is little good to be found on this world, the more he can feel a yearning to be in a place that is completely good, and he seeks it more and more. The more we recoil from all the evil on this world, the more we yearn to connect to a world that is completely good, in which there is no evil.

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