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## Tefillah - 120 Finding The Shechinah

### ***The Concept of the Shechinah***

In the blessing of **ולירושלים**, we ask Hashem **ותשכן בתוכה**, that He should return His *Shechinah* (Holy Presence) back to Jerusalem.

When we had the *Beis HaMikdash*, the *Shechinah* was mainly present in the *Beis HaMikdash*. Before the *Beis HaMikdash*, the *Shechinah* was still in Eretz Yisrael, but after the *Beis HaMikdash* was built, the *Shechinah* was mainly found in the *Beis HaMikdash*. It was mainly in the camp of the Leviim, and even more specifically, in the “camp of the *Shechinah*”, and to be even more specific, in the Holy of Holies, inside the *Aron* (the Ark).

What exactly is the concept of the *Shechinah* (Hashem’s Holy Presence)? The *Shechinah* can be hidden or revealed. The Vilna Gaon writes that the *Shechinah* is essentially a revelation of Hashem’s existence onto the world. And when the *Shechinah* goes into exile, Hashem’s Presence is concealed from the world, and instead Hashem’s Presence becomes hidden from the world.

### ***“Ain Od Milvado”: Nothing Except Revelation or Concealment***

When Hashem’s Presence is hidden from the world, this is called *he’elam* (hiddenness). It is also called *hester* (concealment). There are a few facets to the concept of *he’elam\hester*; we will explain.

To give a general description, before Hashem created the world, there were no creations, and it was clear in Creation that He was the only One in creation. This is expressed in our *emunah* that Hashem is the One who existed before all creations.

*Shechinah* is from the word *shachein*, “neighbor” – for a person to feel that Hashem dwells in him like a neighbor that resides in him.

After Creation, it seems that there are “many” other Creations within Creation, but the truth is that this is only the external surface of the Creation. In the inner essence of Creation, there is no one but Hashem. “*Ain Od*” – There is nothing besides for Him in the Creation. There are many ways to explain this concept, but what pertains to our discussion is, that there is nothing besides for Hashem in Creation.

All *he’elam\hester* in Creation – all the concealment that is going on, which conceals Hashem’s Presence from us – is all taking place on the outer layer of Creation. The world *olam*, world, is from the word *he’elam*, because the world itself conceals the reality of Hashem from us. But in the inner

layer of Creation – the true depth of reality – there is nothing but *giluy*, the revelation of Hashem.

There are always two sides to the same coin (the fact that there is nothing in Creation other than Hashem) – *giluy* and *he'elam*. The purpose of the world is to reach *giluy*, and *he'elam* is what we see in front of us, but they are both two angles of the same reality: Hashem is all that exists, and there is nothing besides Him.

This is all that is going on in Creation – there is literally nothing else taking place other than either *giluy* or *he'elam*. This is the depth behind the concept of *Achdus HaBeriah*, that all details of Creation are really unified in its essence.

### ***Changing Your View on Reality***

In the world we see in front of us, there is much separation and strife going on. But that is only when we view the world through a superficial lens.

If we look at Creation through an inner way, we will see the inner layer of reality, which is that Creation is entirely unified. All of Creation is unified through the fact that there is nothing except for Hashem – *Ain Od Milvado*.

Since there is really nothing besides for Hashem, every detail of Creation is unified through the inner perspective. There is nothing going on in Creation except for either *giluy* – revelation of Hashem – and *heelam*, the concealment of this.

When we absorb this knowledge that all of Creation is entirely *giluy* and *heelam*, when it penetrates in our heart – it will transform us. It is the true perspective on all of life. When it penetrates into our heart, this is the true way to view reality. It will enable us to live a constant awareness of Hashem's Presence.

We can compare this to a person who gets sick, who begins to appreciate his life more now that he has become sick. If he used to run after nonsense, now he will seek truth. His whole perspective towards life changes. The knowledge that there is nothing other than *giluy* and *he'elam* is what changes our perspective on life and causes us to live life very differently.

When people don't think about truth, they go through the motions of life as usual. But when a person thinks about this concept and he lets it penetrate into his heart, he becomes a new person. All he will see in Creation is nothing but *giluy* and *heelam*, and he will then feel Hashem on a regular basis.

"*Ain Od Milvado*" is not just another fact we come across. It is rather a piece of knowledge which totally destroys all superficial perspectives on life. When a person doesn't internalize *Ain Od Milvado*, he is susceptible to sin; Chazal say that when a person sins, a *ruach shtus* (spirit of folly) enters him<sup>[1]</sup>. The *ruach shtus* is essentially when a person is unaware of *Ain Od Milvado*, and that is why he can be vulnerable to sin.

### ***D'veykus to Hashem Through Daas of the Mind and Daas of the Heart***

It is written, "*And you will know today, and you shall settle the matter upon your heart.*" We have an avodah to internalize our mind's knowledge into our heart. Understandably, there are levels to how much we can internalize *emunah* into our heart.

We have a mind and a heart; the awareness of Hashem we have in our mind needs to become felt in our heart, but that is still the first level of internalization. This is the *daas* of our mind, which we can then internalize into our heart. But there is a second level of internalization, and it is called acquiring

"daas of the heart." This is when we can actually sense, in our heart, Hashem. It is when we feel "nochach" - "opposite" Hashem.

These are two different kinds of *d'veykus* with Hashem - through our mind and heart - and these are the two root goals of all our Avodah.

When a person learns Torah, he tends to think that *d'veykus* to Hashem is solely through learning Torah, as the *Nefesh HaChaim* writes; his *d'veykus* to Hashem is entirely experienced through his intellect. Another kind of *d'veykus* to Hashem is to cry to Hashem from one's heart and feel *nochach*. These are the two kinds of *d'veykus* with Hashem one can reach, but each of these alone does not suffice.

To be more precise, learning Torah is the way to get to *d'veykus* with Hashem, and when we penetrate to the Torah's depths, we can get to the innermost point of the Torah, which is the depth of the knowledge about *Ain Od Milvado* - that there is nothing in Creation except for *giluy* and *heelam*. There, we can know and feel that Hashem is "*sasra v'galya*" (Hidden and Revealed at once). This is the depth of "daas of the heart."

Of course, just because a person senses Hashem in his heart, this does not mean that he will never succumb to sin anymore. There are always failures in our *Avodas Hashem*, but the point is, that in spite of our many failings and drops in our spiritual level, we are always able to palpably feel Hashem in our life.

These are the two parts to our *d'veykus* - becoming attached with Hashem through the mind (through Torah study) and through the heart (feeling Hashem's existence). The *d'veykus* through the heart is not as known to most people. Those who truly seek Hashem can feel what *daas* of the heart is; but it is hidden from most people. Even the first kind of *d'veykus*, which is clarity through the mind about the truth, is also very hidden from people.

When a person reaches either one of these two kinds of *d'veykus*, this is the *Shechinah* he can reveal. It is hidden at first, and a person can reveal it, when he reaches *d'veykus* to Hashem within himself.

In the *Beis HaMikdash*, a person was able to sense Hashem completely, no less than how a person can feel when he is happy or sad. It was "daas of the heart" - a palpable sense of awareness to Hashem, not just an intellectual awareness, and not just a feeling. Just like a person can feel hot or cold, happy or sad, so could a person simply feel Hashem there. It was not just a feeling - it was *daas* of the heart; it was internalized that *Ain Od Milvado*, that there is nothing but *giluy* and *heelam*.

### **Connecting With the Shechinah**

We were exiled due to our sins. We *daven* every day for the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Even when we got the second *Beis HaMikdash*, the *Shechinah* did not return. We don't have a *Beis HaMikdash*, and we surely don't have the *Shechinah*. We pray and await the return of the *Shechinah*. We should merit it soon. But what should we do in the meantime, when we have no *Beis HaMikdash* and no *Shechinah*?

It is written, "*I dwell amongst them [even] amidst their impurity.*" Hashem is always with us. Also, the *sefarim hakedoshim* revealed the concept of *Olam* (World\Place), *Shanah* (Year\Time), and *Nefesh* (Soul), that everything in Creation takes place on three planes. For everything that is contained in a place in the world, we can find it manifested in time, and we can find every place and time in our soul as well. In the world, the place where the *Beis HaMikdash* was found was in the Holy of Holies. In time, the *Shechinah* is found on Shabbos and Yom Tov, as the *sefarim hakedoshim* tell us; that a person can reach a degree of *Shechinah* on Shabbos and Yom Tov.

And in our soul, we can also find *Shechinah*. How? The Gemara says that 36 *tzaddikim* greet the *Shechinah* every day. So we still have some of the *Shechinah* even though there is no *Beis HaMikdash*. The 36 *tzaddikim* have the revelation of the *Shechinah*. The Steipler zt"l explained this to mean that these *tzaddikim* greet the *Shechinah* every day because they can feel Hashem very palpably.

How can a person possibly find the *Shechinah* nowadays? Where is it revealed? The simple understanding of this is that although we live in a time of *hester* (concealment of Hashem's radiance), we can still see miracles sometimes; we see *Hashgacha Peratis* sometimes. We do not have the full revelation of the *Shechinah*, but we can still see a **spark** of it. There are times where we can feel Hashem's Presence as we go through a difficulty, such as when are *zoche* to find a *shidduch* [for ourselves, or for our children] or when we have *parnassah*, and other such times.

But there is yet a deeper way to feel the *Shechinah* today. How? It is because the real perspective we are supposed to have on Creation is that the entire Creation is really *Ain Od Milvado*!! There is nothing besides Hashem! There is no difference if the *hester* going on is big or small. It's all a *hester* – it's all “concealing” and “hiding” the reality of *Ain Od Milvado*.

When a person absorbs that there is nothing in Creation other than *giluy* and *hester*, he can see through all the *hester panim*. It's all “one” – two sides of the same coin of *Ain Od Milvado*, of the reality of Hashem: *giluy* and *hester*.

### **True Reality**

This is not a mere attempt at trying give some definition of reality. It *is* reality itself.

Although we live in a world filled with impurity, more than it ever was, it's all a *hester*. There is more *hester* than ever. But it's all a *hester* – it is covering over the true reality. It's all hiding the one, single point which defines reality as it is: *Ain Od Milvado*.

All the *hester* we see, all the disparity, evil, and impurity going on in the world – is all just *hester*. It's not the real reality. It's all just hiding and concealing from us the fact of *Ain Od Milvado*.

By absorbing this, a person can see through it all and see how there is only One thing going on: Hashem. There is nothing except either the *giluy* of His presence or the *hester* of His presence.

Seeing through the *hester panim* does not just mean that we can notice *Hashgacha Peratis* (Divine Providence). Our Rabbis did write than in the era preceding Moshiach, when there will be a lot of *hester panim*, we can still see *Hashgacha Peratis*, especially when it comes to *shidduchim* (finding a spouse). This is certainly true, but there is more to it.

It is not just that we are in darkness now and that in the future we will have all the light. Even right now, you can penetrate the darkness and see a spark of what lies ahead. Although we haven't yet merited Moshiach, each person can merit the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash* in his soul. Who merits this? The ones who realize that all of Creation is nothing but *giluy* and *he'elam* of Hashem.

We ask Hashem during the *tefilllos* of Rosh HaShanah that the world become filled with the knowledge of Him. But although we haven't yet merited this revelation completely, in our soul, we can merit it. You can have the *Beis HaMikdash* in your own soul, in the present moment – when you feel the *Shechinah* in your heart, when you feel how much He exists.

This is through both *daas* of your mind and *daas* of your heart, together. This is the life of *nochach p'nei Hashem*, always feeling that Hashem is in front of us.

This is the true way to look at life – for anyone who truly seeks Hashem.

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[1] Sotah 2a

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