



BUILDING A SANCTUARY IN THE HEART

The Power Of A Jew To See Hashem

Chazal state, “Yisrael (the Jewish people) were the first thoughts of Hashem, to be created.” (*Bereishis Rabbah 1:64*) The first thing that Hashem thought about, so to speak, was *Klal Yisrael*. The depth of this is that “Hashem looked into the Torah” to create the world, and it is *Klal Yisrael* who can see the Torah in each thing, thus, *Klal Yisrael* was His first thought.

“Yisrael, the Torah and *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* (the Holy One, Blessed Is He) are one.” (*Zohar, parshas Yisro 90b*) In other words, the Jew’s soul can see “Torah” in each thing - he can see *Hashem* in each thing. This is not some intellectual definition that we read about in the *sefarim*. It is very relevant in our life! A Jew can see the Torah in everything, and he can see Hashem in everything – the One who looked **into** the Torah. At the giving of the Torah, the Jewish people received the ability to see the depths of Torah in everything – to see Hashem in each thing.

It is well-known that the Chofetz Chaim would always review the story of *Bereishis* – the creation of the six days of the week and Shabbos. What is the depth behind this? It is because one must always return to the beginning. When one reflects on the beginning of everything, it is then that he sees ‘Torah’ in everything.

When reflecting upon Creation, we can keep seeing how Hashem is in everything. The heavens created on the second day are the heavens that were sustained by the word of Hashem. The land exists because the word of Hashem allows it to keep existing. The animals exist because Hashem said they should.

Ordinarily when we see an animal, we do not see the “word of Hashem” in it. We would say it came from its parent, who came from its parents, etc. Perhaps if we would see an animal that was from the six days of Creation, then we would have no doubts that it came from Hashem. Otherwise, we usually do not see the “word of Hashem” in animals. Now, when we see a fish, do we view it as the “word of Hashem”; instead, we see it as a fish that came from a fish, which came from another fish, etc.

But if we realize that it came from the six days of Creation, we can remind ourselves that it came from Hashem, and then we can see how everything in Creation is all from Hashem. The depth of the *mitzvah* of bringing *bikkurim* is thus not just about simply bringing *bikkurim* for Hashem. [It is because the *bikkurim* remind us of a beginning.] We need to see the beginning of each thing, and when we see the beginning, we see Hashem. When we reflect on what the beginning of each thing is, we can reveal Hashem in each thing.

When we realize that each thing we see in Creation was created by Hashem during the first six days of Creation, it helps us gain the perspective to always reveal the beginning of each thing. In this way, whenever we see anything, whether it is a fish, or a bird, we see “*Istakel B’Oiraisa*” in it.

May Hashem help us merit to receive the Torah completely, to see in each thing how “Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world” – not just to see the *world*, but to see how *Hashem* and His Torah are in each thing. Then, we can truly receive the Torah. (excerpt from the sefer Bilvavi on the Parshah)

Author's Introduction

The purpose of this work is to show the way and impart the necessary insight to attain true perfection as defined by the Mesillas Yesharim. In his opening chapter he writes as follows: “The only true perfection is deveikus to Hashem. This is what David *HaMelech* referred to when he said: ‘And as for me, closeness to Hashem is my good’. Only this is good, while anything else deemed good by people is vanity and deceptive emptiness.”

The ideas presented in this work are based on fundamental principles of the deeper aspects of Torah wisdom. Since not everyone is capable of comprehending these profound concepts, we, for the most part, have omitted our sources, and presented only the practical approach developed from these principles. If one desires to also understand the underlying concepts “the Torah is available for anyone who wishes to study it.”

The ideas presented here have a tendency to proliferate and digress into other topics, so we have made every effort not to stray from the main point which is how to achieve deveikus in a tangible and simple way. We have, therefore, greatly condensed the ideas and we have tried to omit any topics that will deflect the reader’s attention from the central theme. Our intention is that it will always be clear to a person that his goal in life is attaining deveikus to Hashem.



Section One: Clarifying the Purpose of Life

1. The primary task of a person’s service of Hashem is to clearly identify the purpose of his life.

Let us begin with a brief introduction.

Every Jew knows as a matter of course that there is a Creator Who created the world, including oneself. He also sustains the entire world, including oneself.

The Creator of the world tells each person what He expects of him. The root of the problem, however, lies in the fact that the person does not have a clear idea of what Hashem wants from him. What exactly does Hashem ask and expect him to do in his life? One might ask, “Are we dealing with someone who does not know that we have a Torah given to us from Heaven? We have already received the Torah, which explains that man’s purpose throughout his life is to fulfill the 613 mitzvos!”

However, the truth is that the world is called *olam*, which relates to the word *he’elem*, concealment, because here, in this world, there is tremendous confusion. It is Hashem’s will that as long as one does not yearn and work very hard to ascertain precisely, “What does Hashem, your G-d, seek from you,” he will not know it. His life will progress with confusion and obscurity, and he will not have a method of how to serve the Creator.

The point is that although undoubtedly, a person knows that he must keep the 613 *mitzvos*, service of Hashem is not merely the fulfillment of unrelated mitzvos whenever they present themselves. Rather, the 613 mitzvos must be fulfilled as if one is building an edifice, so that the mitzvos will build a person properly. Therefore, there needs to be a clearly defined method of fulfilling the mitzvos in an organized, structured form. One must know what is to be the beginning of the structure, its continuation, and what is the goal of fulfilling all the mitzvos. In other words, a person must clarify how fulfilling mitzvos builds his soul, and what process to follow in order to achieve this.

There are six hundred and thirteen mitzvos given to man, but he must identify and choose with which of these *mitzvos* to begin. (Obviously, there are mitzvos that apply daily, and those that apply at specific times, and we know when to fulfill them. We are not discussing these.) There is a mitzvah to love Hashem, and a mitzvah to fear Him, and another *mitzvah* to cleave to Him, and many such mitzvos. One must put them into a set order. Not knowing the correct order is a state of *he’elem*, confusion. When there is *he’elem*, it is difficult to attain the goal of the *mitzvos*. ■ Reprinted from the sefer Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh Part One

QUESTION The Rav explained that this year of 5780 was a year where Hashem allowed some of His wrath to be shown, by bringing the coronavirus. Does that mean that each progressing year we will be seeing harsher and harsher displays of Hashem's wrath, *chas v'shalom*? Is Hashem increasingly minimizing His trait of patience, *chas v'shalom*, and do we have a lot to worry of what's in store for us??

ANSWER If you only look at the external aspect of the period we are in, then yes, it is a difficult time to live through, because we are in the "birth contractions" leading up to Mashiach, and the closer we get to Mashiach, the more painful the birth contractions are. *Chazal* said that in the period before Mashiach comes, there will be increasing *tzaros* (troubles and difficult situations). But at the inner layer of all of this is the light of Mashiach, which is becoming increasingly stronger with the closer we are getting to the end of the current 6000 year era. Therefore, one should connect himself to the illumination of Mashiach, by entering into an inner world of simple, earnest belief and unquestioning loyalty to Hashem and all that will happen. This will open up the gates of understanding to a person, and it will also open the gates of the heart, through increased deeper feeling and recognition. This illumination, when accessed, can send blessing into the external dimension and sweeten the pain of the birth contractions, making it an easier period to deal with.

QUESTION What is the practical difference between the *avodas Hashem* we have had to do throughout the duration of *galus* (exile) versus the *avodas Hashem* of current times?

ANSWER The unique *avodah* of today's generation is to connect to Hashem earnestly and simply (with unquestioning loyalty), and from this we will merit the light of the Torah's wisdom, because wisdom comes from *ayin* (the spiritual), for the Torah's wisdom is longer than the land, wider than the sea, and vastly deep. In our times, besides for attaining the Torah's wisdom by warring against the impure forces, the Torah's wisdom is also attained through the pleasantness of this earnest and simple connection with Hashem. ■ from the archive of Q & A- www.question.bilvavi.net

Chapter 6 -Nurturing The Neshamah of Your Child

Every person is a soul, covered over by the body, which is the soul's "garment". The purpose of why we came onto this world is to remove our bodily perception of ourselves and reveal our existence as a neshamah (Divine soul).

Thus, if parents want to raise their children properly, and they are aware that each child contains a pure neshamah (as we say each morning in the blessing of Elokai Neshamah, "A pure soul You created me with"), it is now upon the parents to realize that the central goal of all the chinuch on our children is this: to guide our child to the purpose of why we are here on this world - which is, to reveal the neshamah.

Today there are many parenting books that have appeared on the scene. There is also a countless array of parenting seminars and workshops available today that we can find. But there is one thing that is lacking amidst all of this. A large percentage of these ideas are borrowed from the approaches of the modern, gentile world. Perhaps we can raise a decent non-Jewish child from this, but it is not the way of chinuch that is fitting for a Jewish child.

Parents who are of the Jewish nation, who wish to give a proper chinuch to their children and raise them to live a true Jewish life, cannot remain at the level of practical action alone, in order to succeed at chinuch. It will not either be enough if we know how to develop our children's emotions and thoughts alone. A non-Jewish child will turn out very good if he is developed in these areas, but these areas alone will not be enough to inculcate proper values into a Jewish child, who comes from our holy forefathers. For the Jewish child, whose soul is not like the other nations of the world, we need an entirely different approach towards child education than the one which the modern world offers.

The basic element of a Jewish child's chinuch is the perspective that he is a neshamah. Meaning, we must help the child form an aspiration to reveal his existence as a neshamah, which at first is hidden and concealed from awareness.

The task that lies upon a Jewish parent, therefore, starts with the neshamah perspective. First we need to get the child to understand that he is a neshamah, and when the child is brought to that point, we can then further develop him in the areas of action, emotion, and thought. When the child reveals his existence as a neshamah, he will then do what he needs to do, he will feel that which he is supposed to feel, and he will know how to think properly. ■ Printed for the first time from the sefer ילדך ילך דע את

Nefesh HaChaim

The Nefesh HaChaim starts *Shaar Daled* (Gate IV) by stating that every Jew has an obligation to learn Torah, day and night, and that we must know the greatness of our obligation towards learning the Torah.

We all know that we have an obligation to learn Torah, and all of us are already doing that, *Baruch Hashem*. But what is new to us here is: How great our obligation to learning is.

Firstly, the obligation towards learning needs to be defined, as there are certain situations in which one is exempt from learning Torah.

Also, besides for knowing this, included in this is not to rely on having grown up in a Torah environment. It is not enough for a person if he grew up in a Torah environment; he needs to personally connect to the Torah, by reflecting into how great Torah learning is.

One should therefore reflect into the concept of “Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world”; and how “Hashem, the Torah, and Yisrael are one”. One who truly thinks about this will realize how great his obligation of learning Torah is.

But if one merely reads the words of the Nefesh HaChaim as mere facts of knowledge, and he doesn't try to internalize them in his heart, he won't know of how great his obligation towards learning Torah. One must continuously make sure that he reflects about what his obligation of learning Torah is. If someone is learning Torah year and year, he must make sure that he is also aware of his obligation towards learning; he must deepen his awareness as time goes on.

Of course, you always have an obligation to learn Torah, and that doesn't change. But what does need to change is the quality of your feeling of connection to learning. It must feel stronger to you as time goes on, and if it is not growing, it is a sign that something is missing from your learning.

This should not just be mere inspiration - it must be an inner clarification about your personal connection to Torah is.

We are commanded to learn Torah day and night – this is not simply because we are supposed to always “take up our free time” with learning Torah, *chas*

v'shalom. Rather, it is because since Torah was created before the word, it is above time, and therefore we must learn Torah day and night, because there is no set “time” to learn Torah.

In order for one to realize this, he needs to penetrate deeply into his soul, into the place where “Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world.” One needs to know with both his intellect and then with heart, to feel that Torah is the greatest reality that exists, second in importance only to the reality of Hashem. Torah is the beginning of all creation.

One must know, with clarity, of how great learning Torah is. It is not enough to merely be inspired by the words you read about of how great the Torah is. The truth is that no word can really describe the depth of its greatness.

So the real question is if a person will just seek to superficially “inspire” himself about how much his connection to Torah is - or if he will make a truly deep reflection about the level of his current personal connection to learning the Torah. Is one approaching the learning of *sefer* Nefesh HaChaim in the same way that one learns *mussar*, which must be learned with a mournful voice that awakens him to tears? Or he is more interested in learning this *sefer* in-depth, so that he can clarify these matters?

It is more important for one to focus on getting clarity on these matters; to learn these matters in-depth, as opposed to trying to learn it as *mussar*. Of course, it is wonderful if one learns it with passion, but that should not be the main approach here. The focus here should be on knowing and analyzing these matters in-depth.

One must be very clear in what the roots are of why we learn Torah. In order to live in the “clear world” that is the Torah, one has to first gain clarity of what his connection to learning Torah is.

It's scary to think that a person can be sitting and learning Torah for several hours each seder, analyzing the most subtle of subtleties, when he has never yet clarified what the root of his own Torah learning is. ■

Translated from the original hebrew shiur א פרק ד שער ד 001 נפש החיים
הקדמה

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