



בלבבי  
משכן אבנה

# BUILDING A SANCTUARY IN THE HEART

## WHAT WE CAME HERE FOR

In *Parashas Shemos*, the Torah writes, “*And they embittered their lives with difficult labor, with mortar and bricks*”. The exile in Egypt was one of *avodah koshoh*, of “difficult labor”, which causes *ameilus*, exertion.

Our very life on this world is really a life of exertion. The verse testifies, “*A man is born to toil*”, and the Gemara wonders: Is this referring to physical work or exertion in Torah learning? The Gemara concludes that we are born for exertion in Torah. Life on This World contains exertion, effort, and hard work.

Exertion is defined as anything that bothers us and strains us. *Ameilus* (exertion) is from the word *he'elam* (concealment). There is a well-known teaching of our Sages that the “world” is called “*olam*” from the word “*he'elam*” (concealment), and man’s task on this world is to have *amal*, exertion, and thereby remove the *he'elam*\concealment of Hashem’s Presence from this world. We must have exertion on this world so that we can remove the barriers that conceals the light of the *ruchniyus* - the Torah, and Hashem’s Presence. That is what lies at the core of all our exertion in *ruchniyus* that we have, during our stay on This World.

*Chazal* teach that the “difficult labor” of Egypt was the fact that it was *avodas perach*, “cruel labor”, for the men were given women’s labor, and the women were given men’s labor, meaning that they were given work that went against their nature. Whenever a person does something that against his nature, this feels like *ameilus*/exertion.

A person has to keep putting effort into his Torah, doing all the *mitzvos*, doing Hashem’s will, and to keep improving upon his spiritual accomplishments. That is one kind of exertion – to keep continuing and adding onto whatever accomplishments in *ruchniyus* he has attained so far. But the deeper aspect of one’s exertion is that one has to keep going against his nature.

In depraved Egypt, the concept of *ameilus* existed as *avodas perech*. But in the side of *kedushah* (holiness), the concept of *ameilus* is the main part of one’s *avodah* of serving Hashem on this world: going against one’s nature. This is the meaning of true exertion in Torah, and that is the deep choice that one can make on this world: To choose to have one’s hard work on this world by exerting oneself in Torah, and in fulfilling Hashem’s will. ■ *excerpt from the sefer Bilvavi*

*on the Parshah*

The *Zohar* states that there is no *teshuvah* for one who damages the *Bris* (the Holy Covenant – guarding one’s personal holiness). Elsewhere, the *Zohar* states the opposite – that through *teshuvah*, one can rectify this sin. This apparent contradiction is resolved by the Sages, who explained that there are two levels of *teshuvah* – “lower *teshuvah*”, which is on the level of *chochmah* (wisdom), and “higher *teshuvah*”, which is on the level of *binah* (“understanding”). It is explained that the *Zohar*’s words that *teshuvah* doesn’t help for this sin is only when one does “lower *teshuvah*”, but if one does “higher *teshuvah*” - on the level of *binah* – such *teshuvah* can rectify this sin.<sup>1</sup> Let us understand the depth to this.

[Chazal taught that when Yosef escaped the wife of Potiphar, 10 droplets of seed left him, and on Yosef’s exalted level], this was regarded as a sin of damaging the *Bris* - of which it is said in the *Zohar* that there is no *teshuvah* for. The inner meaning of this is that in the level that corresponds to “Yosef” (and, by extension, Mashiach ben Yosef), there is *teshuvah* for all sins except for the sin of damaging the *Bris*. But there can be a higher form of *teshuvah* that atones for this sin, as the *Zohar* mentions. What is that higher form of *teshuvah*? It is essentially when we access the point above *teshuvah*.

Within the dimension of *teshuvah*, one who damages the *Bris* cannot rectify this sin, because he has created disparity, through separating his seed and causing it to become scattered through-

<sup>1</sup> Editor’s Note: The *sefer Keser Rosh* (a student of the Vilna Gaon) explains that through learning in-depth Torah study, one does “*teshuvah* on the level of *binah*” and rectifies the sin of damaging the Holy Covenant.

out the world, and he cannot return all of the branches to their root. But when one reveals the point where disparity isn’t possible, where it is retroactively revealed that there was never a disparity at all – for there is nothing that exists other than the unity of Hashem –that is where the sin of damaging the *Bris* can be rectified.

Within the “49 Gates of Understanding”, there is sin, and there is also *teshuvah* for sin. But in the “50<sup>th</sup> Gate”, there is no possibility of sin, and hence no need for *teshuvah*. The “49 gates of understanding” correspond to Yosef, or Mashiach ben Yosef, who represents *chochmah* wisdom, where there can be sin, and which requires *teshuvah* to fix.

But it is really impossible to do *teshuvah*, from the perspective of This World alone. For this reason, *teshuvah* had to precede Creation, for *teshuvah* is really a power that comes from above the limits of Creation. If *teshuvah* preceded the world, that means it is impossible within our world to reach *teshuvah*, for it is of a higher dimension entirely. So we must reveal the point where there is no necessity for *teshuvah*. This is the meaning of how *teshuvah* “preceded” the world. As long as a person tries to reach complete *teshuvah* within this world, he will never reach it, because *teshuvah* is a point that is above this Creation, and hence unattainable as we are on this world. Therefore, how do we reach *teshuvah*? Only through connecting to the point that precedes the Creation. When one is connected to there, where “No thought can grasp Him”, he can then understand a deeper dimension, that there is no necessity for *teshuvah* - because there is a dimension in which sin isn’t possible [due to the full revelation of Hashem’s presence,

*Ain Od Milvado* - hence there is no need for *teshuvah*].

When a person progresses throughout *teshuvah*, he may finally reach the “49<sup>th</sup> gate of holiness”, the final gate within the realm of *teshuvah*, but there he will find that he cannot rectify every sin, such as the sin of damaging the *Bris*, a sin which cannot be rectified [according to the regular system]. What, then, is *teshuvah*? It means to access the point that precedes the world, to connect oneself to this point – and that, itself, is *teshuvah*!!! Thus, *teshuvah* does not mean simply to “return” [from sin], but to connect oneself to the point that precedes Creation, where there is no possibility of sin – the point where there is *Ain Od Milvado*.

We are all created with our limitations, which require us to keep the bounds of the Torah by observing all of the *mitzvos*, and we also have a point within us where we can shatter our limitations and reveal our unlimited aspect [which is a spark of the Infinite Light of Hashem within us]. (Of course, this doesn't mean we don't have those limitations. A person must keep the entire Torah, because just as our unlimited point exists, so does our limited point in exist, and we must acknowledge it.) Within our “limited” point, we can become either closer or distant from Hashem. But in our “unlimited” aspect, where everything is unified [under the oneness of Hashem, where Hashem rules alone] because there it is entirely “*Ain Od Milvado*”, there is no “closeness” or “distance” from the Creator there. It is the part of our soul that is called “*Yechidah*”, which is so connected to Hashem that no separation can occur there.

In the lower levels of our soul, there is a need to have an intimate connection with Hashem and there are levels of closeness that one attain with Hashem. At those levels in the soul, it is possible to either be closer or distant, from G-d. But at the deepest level of the soul, the “*Yechidah*”, one is already integrated with Hashem, so there are no varying levels of closeness with Hashem there. And this is true even for the worst sinner in the world, who sins in order to anger Hashem. The “*Yechidah*” part of one's soul cannot ever become distanced from Hashem, and neither can it be destroyed. It is essentially the inner, silent voice in the soul, which silences all of the senses of the soul, and which gives a person the ability to hear the true perspective that calls out from deep inside him, which says: “*Ain Od Milvado*”, There is nothing besides for Him.

This inner voice is being sounded all the time, but when a person leaves his connection to Hashem, he will not hear this voice. But when a person attunes his thoughts to it, shutting out the entire perspective of This World – he will then hear the perspective of the *Yechidah* in his soul, which listens attentively to the reality of *Ain Od Milvado*.

There is no way to express this, and there are no words for it. But it is the grasp on *havayah* [the deeper, spiritual dimension of reality]), the way to perceive Creation through the *Yechidah* in the soul, which sees that all is *Ain Od Milvado*. This is the secret of Creation: There is nothing that separates a person from Hashem! This is the depth of the verse, “*Praiseworthy is the man, who does not forget You*”! ■ from *Yom Kippur\_04\_Teshuvah and Beyond*

**QUESTION** Shalom to the Rav. Am I able to truly achieve a *tikkun* (soul-rectification) for all of the various sins and misdeeds which I have done....?

**ANSWER** Yes.

**QUESTION** The Rav describes in *sefer "Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh"* about how a person should think the simple thought "There is a Creator of the world." If a person persists with such thinking, will this also fix the damage to his *Yesod* (one's personal holiness)?

**ANSWER** Guarding one's *Yesod* (personal holiness) corresponds to the soul faculty of *hiskashrus*, "connection". To the extent that a person is *miskasher* (connected) and becoming attached with HaKadosh Baruch Hu, a person repairs his *Yesod* on an inner level.

**QUESTION** If a person finds it too difficult to fast, can the Rav recommend any path he can take, by which can rectify sins related to the period of Shovavim, so that no imprint of sin remains on a person?

**ANSWER** He should fix his primary negative *middah* (character trait), and he should become connected, consistently and with clarity, to the world of Torah thought [regularly thinking about words of Torah].

**QUESTION** How can a person avoid the problem of *keri* when sleeping at night (besides for making sure not to view anything inappropriate during the day)?

**ANSWER** 1) One's meals at night should be

light, and one should not eat foods that cause the body to become aroused during sleep [*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*]. 2) Alternatively, sleep with the feet tied together and exposed [uncovered by a blanket], or keep the feet folded on each other. 3) Before going to sleep, say the pesukim of Tehillim that are said on Yom Kippur night [which appear in the Yom Kippur Machzor after Maariv of Yom Kippur]. Also repeat for 3 times the *pasuk* of *Kedoshim Tihyu*, "You shall be holy to Hashem..." (Vayikra 19:2).

**QUESTION** Is there any way of *avodah* mentioned in the sefarim of the Rav which can help a person come out of the darkness that he finds himself in when it comes to the struggle with guarding *Bris Kodesh*?

**ANSWER** [Yes.] Through *mesirus nefesh* (being willing to die rather than sinning) - even if it is only a little bit.

**QUESTION** If a person has a struggle with *Shemiras HaBris* and he davens a lot about it and sometimes even cries about it to Hashem, but he keeps falling in this area, will he merit the *Geulah* (Redemption) if he hasn't yet fixed these sins by the moment the *Geulah* arrives? Especially because there are sources that say that only people who are *shomer* the bris (people who are careful in the area of *Bris Kodesh*) will merit the *Geulah*.

**ANSWER** If one tried very hard all of his life in this area, and he also suffered because of it, he is not disqualified from the *Geulah*. ■ from the *Bilvavi Q & A archive*

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