

Bilvavi

בלבבי
משכן
אבנה

TO BE ENTIRELY FOR HASHEM

Parshas Tzav discusses the *korbon olah*, which is completely burnt, because it goes entirely for Hashem. Unlike the other *korbonos*, which were later eaten, there was not a trace of the *korbon olah* left on this world after it was burnt, for it was entirely dedicated to Hashem.

In terms of our own *avodas Hashem*, the *korbon olah* represents the concept of being entirely dedicated to Hashem, which is the concept of *lishmah*, to live our lives for Hashem.

The Ramban said that the *korbonos* would atone for a person's *aveiros* because the person would see how the animal was getting killed, and he would realize that the animal is being killed instead of him. Applying this to the *korbon olah*, just as the *korbon olah* was entirely burnt, so is a person able to understand that he can become "entirely for Hashem" in his own *nefesh*. This is when a person has *mesirus nefesh* for Torah, or when one learns Torah *lishmah*, where one resembles the *korbon olah* that is completely burnt with no trace left on this world: entirely dedicated to Hashem.

However, although the *korbon olah* was entirely burnt, its skin did not have to be

burnt. This hints to us that as long as we are on this world, which is called the *shis alfin* (the current period of 6000 years), we are not able to act totally *lishmah*. There is always some element of *shelo lishmah* in whatever we do, and we are not able to act 100% *lishmah*. Thus, part of the *korbon olah* could not be burnt, in order to reflect that reality. However, in the future, after the *Geulah*, which will be the state of *Olam HaBa* (the World To Come), we will be able to serve Hashem totally *lishmah*, for that is when we will become entirely for Hashem.

Chazal also said that the *korbon olah* was brought in order to atone for *hirhurei halev*, for any improper thoughts. All *hirhurei halev* are actually coming from self-serving motivations. When a person thinks about himself and what he wants, he can have all kinds of improper thoughts. At the root of all improper thoughts are the self-serving motivations. When the self-serving part of us will be erased, when the *yetzer hora* residing in one's heart will become totally destroyed, it will then be revealed how אין לנו אלא לב אחד לאבינו שבשמים "We only have one heart, to our Father in Heaven", and we will all become raised to the level of כאיש אחד בלב אחד, "As one man, with one heart." (from *Bilvavi On The Parsha*)

SKIPPING TO HIGHER LEVELS

On the night of Pesach, when Hashem “skipped”, He skipped over the normal order of things. Normally, the day is preceded by the nighttime. The *halachic* day begins with the night before it. But on Pesach night, Hashem changed the order. On that night, first Hashem revealed the light of the *Geulah*. The word for light, *ohr*, begins with the letter *aleph*, hinting to the *Alupho shel Olam*, the Chief of the world, Hashem, Who “skips over” all darkness. This is the depth of how Pesach night is a night where there is no darkness, only light - a night where Hashem shines His light: “A night which shines like the day”, לילה כיום, יאיר.

On Pesach, Hashem “skipped” over the normal darkness of nighttime, and instead He shined His light on this night. This resembled the very beginning of Creation, when Hashem’s light filled everything. The light which Hashem made after Creation was mixed with darkness, so it was not on the same level of the light that existed before Creation. Only before Creation was there a light of Hashem that was total, which was not mixed with any darkness. On Pesach, when Hashem revealed His light on this night, He was “skipping” over the order of the normal Creation, meaning that He was skipping over the night/darkness and reverting back to the state of before creation – when only His light filled everything.

Pesach night is called “*leil shimurim*”, a

night that is protected from any harmful forces, as *Chazal* state. The depth of this is that it is a night which is on a level of day, where evil cannot take hold. Since Hashem skipped over the night on this night of Pesach, that itself is the reason why we are protected from harm – it is because Hashem skips over the entire mode of “night” altogether, so this is a night which is on a level of the “day”, a night where the original light of before Creation, the light untainted by any darkness, Hashem’s original light, is shining.

The concept of Hashem’s skipping on the night of Pesach is explained in our *sefarim hakedoshim* as an outpouring of Hashem’s love, דגלו עלי אהבה. When there is love, the normal rules are broken, because “Love conquers limitations”, אהבה מקלקלת השורה, and as it is written, עזה כמות אהבה, “*Love is as tough as death.*” Thus, the revelation of Hashem’s love means that there will be *dilug*, skipping, and therefore **on the night of Pesach, when Hashem revealed His love, a person has the ability to “skip” to higher levels that are normally beyond him.**

In the final generations, when we are closer to Mashiach, the order of our *avodas Hashem* changes, just as it changed on the night of Pesach, the night of the *Geulah*. Instead of the normal order of our *avodas Hashem*, which is to work our way upwards, going “from below to above” (as laid out by all the steps of growth described in *Mesillas Yescharim*), we are able to access **the light** of the *Geulah*, where we can be-

gin “from above”, and to let it permeate and radiate the rest of our being. In other words, **we can start our *avodas Hashem* from the deepest place in ourselves.**

In practical words, this is to start always from the deep place of our *nefesh*, where we already recognize Hashem. Most people do not know what it means to simply recognize the Creator, because they do not put in the effort to recognize Him. After one has put in the effort to recognize the Creator, one should then start from this place before he is about to do anything. **The first thought, before doing anything, should always be: “I am doing this, to bond with Hashem.”** Before doing any *mitzvah*, compose your mind a bit and direct your thoughts to a connection with Hashem.

That is how the routine of our life should become: every day, every hour, to keep bonding with Hashem. It is with this awareness that we should begin our Torah learning and *mitzvos*. We are speaking here of an actual way to live life, to be practiced by anyone who truly seeks closeness to Hashem. Before we are about to do anything, we should begin with a composed mind and think that **“I am doing this act, in order to get closer to Hashem.”** This inner connection to the Creator is the way we should begin before we do anything, throughout the day. **Before learning Torah, or *davening*, or doing an act of *chessed*, or any other deed** – it makes no difference what – it should be preceded with a composed mind, and

with a thought that we are doing this act in order to increase our bond with Hashem!

When one lives this way, **this is the true preparation for the complete Redemption.** Hashem made a promise to us that He will redeem us from this exile, with awesome miracles and wonders, just as He took us out of Egypt with awesome miracles and wonders. We await this Redemption and we prepare for it, not just through cleaning and preparing our homes for Pesach, but through **inner preparation, in our own personal *nefesh*:** Preparing ourselves for the light of the Redemption of Pesach which we experienced in the past, and even more - **for the approaching *Geulah Shelaimah*,** may it come quickly. *(from Pesach_022_Skipping Levels)*

Q&A: THE SEDER

QUESTION Can the Rav please explain about the concept of *dilug* (skipping) in our *avodas Hashem*, on the night of Pesach?

ANSWER The way to “skip” to higher levels on the night of Pesach is, in 1 of 2 ways. (1) Through *mesirus nefesh*, being prepared to give up our lives for Hashem, which reflects the teaching of Chazal, “There are those who acquire their World To Come in one hour.” (2) Or, by connecting ourselves to the “awakening that comes from Above” (*isarusa d’leila*), which immediately connects our *neshamos* to the higher, spiritual dimension. That is the special *ohr* (illumination from Above) that is found on the night of Pesach (5779). **QUESTION** In a family setting where there are younger

children, is it better to focus on conveying the simple meaning of the Hagaddah, relaying *meshalim* (parables) and stories, (which will satisfy the younger children but not the older children)? **ANSWER** One needs to run the *Seder* using his wisdom, and to be attentive at all times to what level the family is on and how much they can concentrate. Accordingly, one can then decide what kinds of insights he can share with them. (5779). **QUESTION** The *Shelah HaKadosh* says that the *Seder* should be conducted with seriousness and with no idle chatter, and that if a person is careful with this, he is *zocheh* to high levels, all his *aveiros* are forgiven, etc. How can a person fulfill this *Shelah HaKadosh* in a family setting where he needs to create a relaxed and light atmosphere by chatting, laughing and joking with the family, etc.? **ANSWER** Any words spoken to the family which create a pleasant atmosphere of enjoying Yom Tov are not in the category of idle chatter. Rather, such chatting is a *mitzvah*. It is just that “Where there is celebration, there should also be seriousness.” (5781) **QUESTION** What is the *Hagaddah*? Is it all a *tefillah*, or is it for the purpose of awakening deeper parts of our *neshamah*, or is it simply to tell over the miracles and sing praises of Hashem? **ANSWER** Each person is able to connect to the *Hagaddah* on their current level. (5781) **QUESTION** What is the depth behind the custom of the children “stealing” the *afikoman*? **ANSWER** We cannot erase the custom of stealing the *afikoman*. There is a deeper reason given for this custom, which we should emphasize

to the children at the *Seder*. Taking the *afikoman* is all an analogy of how we need to search in our own “hidden places” [to do soul-searching]. The deeper implication of “*Tzafon*” is that it is the *ohr hatzafun*, the special light that is hidden away for the *tzaddikim* in the future (which we are able to have a taste of, through the *afikoman*). (5779) **QUESTION** In the sefer “*Bilvavi*”, the Rav explains that *temimus* means that we don’t ask questions. Why then in the *Hagaddah* does the *tam* ask a question? **ANSWER** The *tam* doesn’t ask “Why” or “What’s the reason?” Rather, the *tam* asks *Mah Zeh*, “What’s going on over here, so I can know what I’m doing?” He is only asking “What”, he wants to know the entire process so that he can know how to act properly and in the best way possible. (5779) **QUESTION** How do we influence a child who just isn’t interested in anything? **ANSWER** The only thing we can do is *daven* and cry to Hashem for him/her. (5774) **QUESTION** Does Eliyahu actually visit the house by the *Seder*? **ANSWER** It depends on how meritorious (worthy) the leader of the house and family members are. **QUESTION** Does Eliyahu come to a house where there is Internet? **ANSWER** No! (5781) **QUESTION** The Rav said at the onset of the coronavirus that we are currently in the “intensity” of the “war of Gog and Magog.” Based upon this, I want to understand the words of Rambam in *Hilchos Melachim*, that in the beginning of the era of Mashiach there will be the war of Gog and Magog, which will be preceded with the prophet [Eliyahu] who will straighten

the hearts of the Jewish people and cause national repentance. The Rambam also says that according to a second view, Eliyahu will arrive before Mashiach. According to this second view, Eliyahu should already be here (because the “war of Gog and Magog” has already started), so where is Eliyahu? (5780) **ANSWER** The *Tikkunei HaZohar* states in the introduction that are two levels of “revelation of Eliyahu” – to merit a face-to-face revelation with Eliyahu, and to experience Eliyahu on a spiritual level, in an enlightened state of the mind. Currently in our times, the second form of revelation of Eliyahu mentioned – the experience of Eliyahu in an enlightened state of the mind – is shining strongly now. It can be experienced by anyone who purifies his being even a bit. From there a person can further merit an increase of wisdom, connecting the branches to their root: to discover the root of this revelation by seeing the outcomes of the revelation. This is a degree of what is written regarding the revelation that Eliyahu will bring: “*And he will return the hearts of the fathers on the children, and the hearts of the children on the fathers.*” As for a face-to-face revelation of Eliyahu, there are only a few rare individuals who are *zocheh* to meet him in person. **QUESTION** Are the “revelations of Eliyahu” today only for individuals who are on a high level, or can anyone today reach it? **ANSWER** On any level, one can find a degree of “Eliyahu”, and that is when any new *madreigah* (level) becomes revealed to a person, because the inner implication of “Eliyahu” is revelation. This concept is described by the

Chovos HaLevovos (VIII:3), “Hashem can be found in one’s inner recesses, and one can see Him with his mind’s eye.” (5780)

Q&A: DARKNESS BEFORE PESACH

QUESTION Why did the coronavirus happen right before Pesach, the most pressure-filled time of the year? **ANSWER** What did it look like for the Jewish people right before the redemption from Egypt? Did they arrive at the redemption from Egypt from a state of calmness? They were coming from being in a state of tough, difficult labor with bricks and mortar and with all of the terrible suffering and oppression that took place in Egypt. (5780) **QUESTION** But at the plague of darkness, the Jewish people didn’t have to work anymore... **ANSWER** That only came after their suffering was so terrible that they davened and cried out to Hashem, after the first Pharaoh died. But before [the plague of darkness], the Jewish people first had to go through a period of confusion and disorientation, and from that state of confusion came the next stage, where they enjoyed some tranquility, when the first Pharaoh died and they cried out to Hashem and their prayers were heard by Hashem. The process began with confusion, with being disoriented, and this was followed by calmness, with the first Pharaoh’s death which led to their strong prayers that were heard by Hashem, and then the next step of calmness started for them, when Egypt was stricken with plagues over the course of 12 months. But it all started with the Jewish people being disoriented. It did not start with calmness.

In different terms which mean the same thing, it was dark in the beginning, which was followed by light. It was like the first day of Creation, which began with evening, followed by morning, which completed the first day. That is the way that everything in the Creation happens. There is a rule, *ke-lipah kodemes l'pri*, “The shell comes before the fruit.” The process of Redemption starts with confusion, and **slowly those who are zoche will, with the help of Hashem, not die, unlike the four-fifths of the Jewish people who died in the plague of darkness**, and they will enter into the state of “Let there be light”, in which “The night shines like the day” [which is said regarding the night of Pesach]. **QUESTION** Is right now [the coronavirus] like when the plague of darkness in Egypt was about to happen? **ANSWER** It is not about to happen - everyone is already found in darkness now. (5780) **QUESTION** How do we make sense of all the confusion in our times, where there are so many differing views of *Rabbonim* that are all in disagreement with each other? What does Hashem really want from us? **ANSWER** Choose for yourself one *rav*, and follow what he says, and take your mind off all the details that are confusing you. You need to still be generally aware that everything is shrouded in confusion today, and that **“We have no one to rely on except for our Father in Heaven.”** (5781)

Q&A: THE FINAL GEULAH

QUESTION The *Sfas Emes* says that unlike the first *Geulah* (from Egypt) where

four-fifths of the Jewish people died out in the plague of darkness, in the final *Geulah* every single Jew will go out. But the Rav has been saying that those who remain connected with Internet/the 50th level of *tumah* won't be by the *Geulah*. **ANSWER** The *Sfas Emes* wrote those words because that was the level of his generation [where the entire generation was worthy]. ***Halevay (certainly it is our hope that everyone will be zocheh to Geulah) that this should happen, and Amen Kein Yehi Ratzon,*** may that become Hashem's will. (5781) **QUESTION** It is quoted in the name of the Baal Shem Tov that he *davened* that the *Geulah* should come with mercy, and not with killings and warlike scenarios, and he also *davened* that every Jew should merit to see the *Geulah*. Therefore, why did the Rav say that it's also possible that the *Geulah* can happen through *middas hadin* (where only 7000 people will be *zocheh*), and why does the Rav say that only those who disconnect themselves from the Internet will be *zocheh* to the *Geulah*? **ANSWER** As the *Galus* continued longer, and the 50th Gate of *tumah* descended onto the world, there became an additional need for *hamtakah* (sweetening) that wasn't around before. (5781) **QUESTION** Aren't there *tzaddikim* in every generation who do *hamtakas dinim*, who sweeten all of the judgments on people and who atone for the sins of the generation? **ANSWER** *Hamatakas dinim* (“sweetening of the harsh judgments”) gives a person the *zechus* (the merit) to separate from Internet use. But if a person doesn't separate from Internet, he isn't able to receive *hamtak-*

as dinim. (5781) **QUESTION** Is separating from the Internet only something that individuals in our generations can do, or is it the *avodah* of everyone today? **ANSWER** Separating from internet is equally applicable to everyone. At the same time, people also need to become connected with the highest level of holiness, the *shaar HaNun d'kedushah*. Everyone needs to always see both sides of the coin here. Our focus should not be limited to *sur m'ra*, on how much we need to separate ourselves from this evil, but to also focus on *aseh tov*, on **the good which is in store, for anyone who separates from it** [it is the *ohr haganuz*, the hidden light stored away for *tzaddikim*]. *Zeh l'umas zeh* - for everything evil Hashem created, there is an equally strong amount of holiness and good that exists. (5781) **QUESTION** Since the “*Baal Tzefon* idol” represents the 50th level of *tumah* (spiritual defilement), and Internet is the 50th level of *tumah*, does this mean that the technology for Internet was there inside the *Baal Tzefon* idol, in potential form? **ANSWER** Yes! It was there *b'koach*, in potential form, but not yet in the *poel* (active form). (5781) **QUESTION** If a person is not *zocheh* to the *Geulah* (Redemption) *chas v'shalom*, does that also mean that he can't get into *Olam HaBa* (the Next World)? **ANSWER** Not necessarily. There are the 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th centuries, and in each of them there is a new judgment upon all the creations. (5781) **QUESTION** What happens if we don't withstand the final test before the *Geulah*? **ANSWER** The

most spiritual parts of our self (the part of us which served Hashem *lishmah*) will remain to experience the *Geulah*. The remaining parts of our being will be able to experience the *Geulah* only to the extent that we have undergone *bittul* (self-nullification) in those parts of our being. The process of *bittul* (self-nullification) will actually continue until the end of the 10th century, as discussed in *sefer Daas Tevunos* (88) and onward (5779)

SHVII SHEL PESACH

Lot was saved from the destruction of Sodom only in the merit of Avraham Avinu (*Midrash Tanchuma: Vayeira: 9*). This doesn't simply mean that Avraham Avinu's merits saved Lot. Rather, it means that Lot became infused with the inner traits of Avraham Avinu who had taught him. It was this quality which saved Lot from destruction. What exactly was this inner quality? It was the *mesirus nefesh*, the self-sacrifice which Avraham had in practicing kindness to guests, which was mirrored by the self-sacrifice that Lot showed when he was willing to house guests in Sodom. *Mesirus nefesh* was the only thing which could save him from the immorality, and destruction, of Sodom.

We are living in a generation today which is steeped in the worst levels of *tum'ah* (defilement), which surrounds us from all angles, the lowest level of immorality on the level of *Sodom*. The only way to be saved from these strange, unwanted winds of immorality that blow through the world is by

having *mesirus nefesh* (to be willing to give up what we want, in order to do Hashem's will). If one does not have *mesirus nefesh* in order to do Hashem's will, simply speaking, he cannot survive today! The obligation that is upon us in our times is: To have **total** *mesirus nefesh* for Hashem!

Before *kerias Yam Suf* (the splitting of the sea) when the Egyptians were chasing the Jewish people, the Torah says, "And Hashem said to Moshe, why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the children of Yisrael and journey on." Rashi explains that that Moshe was *davening*, and Hashem said to him, "Now is not the time to be lengthy in prayer, when the Jewish people are in a predicament." This begs a well-known question: If not now, when? Don't Chazal teach that when a person is found in a predicament, he should grab onto the "art of the forefathers" which we have in our hands, and *daven* to Hashem? Why is it that when they came to the sea, their *avodah* was precisely not to *daven*?!

The answer is as follows. When a person is *davening*, it is because he wants something. He is trying to attain his *ratzon* (will), through asking Hashem to get it. But when the people arrived at the sea, they had the *avodah* now to transcend any of their personal *ratzon*, and to arrive at total self-nullification (*bittul*), of having no personal *ratzon* at all. Their *avodah* now was to come to the recognition that "**I only want**

what Hashem wants. If Hashem wants me to live, then I want to live. And if Hashem doesn't want me to live, then that is also what I want, **because I want what Hashem wants.**"

When the Jewish people were leaving Egypt, they had a will to leave it: "*They cried out, and their prayers arose to G-d from all of their difficult labor, and Hashem heard their groans.*" But now when they were standing in front of the sea, they had a much higher level of *avodah* to do. Now their *avodah* was to have absolute *mesirus nefesh*: to be willing to give up their souls entirely for Hashem! To accept the will of Hashem, with all their heart! When that is the case, there is no gain in *davening*, because Hashem wants to see *mesirus nefesh* now. **He wants to see if we are willing to give up what we want, and to want only what Hashem wants, whatever that entails of us** (בלבבי.פסח 053.שביעי של פסח)

Q&A: SHVI' I SHEL PESACH

QUESTION What should be our focal point on *Shvii Shel Pesach*? Is it to remind ourselves of the *mesirus nefesh* that we had when we jumped into the sea, or is it the *shirah*, to sing praise to Hashem out of our *emunah* in Him? **ANSWER** Firstly, focus on *mesirus nefesh*, just as the first achievement then was the *mesirus nefesh* of Nachshon ben Aminadav. After that, focus on expressing *shirah* to Hashem. (5781) (*all Q from the Bilvavi Q&A archive*).

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