

Bilvavi

בלבבי
משכן
אבנה

TAZRIA: A HEART OPENED TO THE TRUTH

In *Parshas Tazria* the Torah says, “And on the eighth day, circumcise the flesh of his foreskin.” The *Mishnah* teaches that only a circumcised Jew is called *mahul* (circumcised), whereas a gentile with a *bris milah* is not considered to be circumcised. Rather, a gentile is always regarded as an *arel*, an uncircumcised person who has not removed his *orlah*. This is based on the *posuk*, “For all the gentiles are uncircumcised, and the entire house of Yisrael are uncircumcised in their hearts.” From this *Mishnah*, we can see that there is great depth to the concept of *orlah*, of being uncircumcised. The concept of *orlah* exists on an inner level as well, because even physical removal of the *orlah* can still mean that the person has the status of an *arel*.

It is written, “And you shall circumcise the foreskin of your hearts.” and the *Targum* translates this to mean, “And remove the foolishness of your hearts.” The *Ibn Ezra* writes: “It makes sense that the meaning of this is to purify the heart, until one understands the truth.” The *Sforno* explains more: “It is proper that you remove the foreskin of your hearts, and this means that you reflect about how to remove all errors which produce erroneous beliefs so that your stiff-neckedness will not become harder. When you remove the hard

stiff-neckedness” which prevents you from turning to that which is proper to turn to, you will turn to recognize your Creator.”

What is the error that produces erroneous beliefs which prevents a person from recognizing the Creator (Hashem)? It is when one forgets that he is living in *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*'s world. When one lives with the feeling that nothing in the world is coincidental, when one knows that he is living in the world of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, it changes his entire view. Whenever he sees anything, and whenever he witnesses an event, instead of seeing only the outer, external “wrap” of the event, he reflects: “How is Hashem speaking to me?” This can be done in any place and in any time, and in any situation.

In a time such as this, when the entire world is shaking, everyone has the obligation to understand, that Hashem is speaking to him and that He wants something from him. One does not have to be a *navi* to understand this. One only needs to be someone who isn't blind, who doesn't remain with the foolishness of the heart, the *orlas halev*, the blockage of the heart which we must remove. (from *Bilvavi On The Parsha*)

METZORA: THE POWER TO BE ALONE

In *Parshas Metzora*, the Torah says that a *metzora* (a leper) “sits alone, outside the camp.” The Gemara says that a *metzora* has caused disparity between husband and wife and between man and his friend through speaking words of slander to them about each other. This slander has caused separation, and therefore, the Torah punishes the *metzora* measure-for-measure, by making him dwell alone, outside the camp separated from society.

The power of being alone exists in the side of disgrace (*kilkul*) as well as in the side of *tikkun* (repair). The *metzora* being alone is the “alone” on the side of ruination, a punishment. But we also find a manner in which being alone is the key to holiness. Chazal said, “Therefore, man was created individual.” (*Sanhedrin 38a*). Adam HaRishon was first created alone, and this was the original state of a person, to live alone (just him and Hashem). At a later point, Hashem said, “*It is not good for man to be alone.*” and He created Chavah to become a helpmate for Adam.

But although Adam requested a helpmate he felt the need for a companion. This was not his innermost function. He still retained the power to be alone, even after Chavah was created. He still was created to become an individual and reach his unique potential.

The *avodah* of every person is to develop this inner space of being “alone” (to live alone with Hashem). And simultaneously, a person also needs to have companionship with others. Adam needed Chavah as a helpmate. In addition, when it comes to learning Torah as well, a person cannot remain alone. It is bad for a person to learn if he never learns with a *chavrusa*.

Everyone needs the balance of these two opposite abilities: the ability to be an individual and live alone with Hashem in one’s heart, as well as the ability to build connections with others and have companionship with others, to love others as much as we love ourselves.

The more a person develops the power of the “alone” the deeper and more genuine his connections to others will be. Then a person repairs the impaired kind of “alone” of the *metzora*, who sits alone, outside the camp and instead, he reveals the true “alone,” which is balanced by an ability to connect to all others. A true kind of life is to have connections with others out of love for each Jew in general, and to be able to learn Torah with others specifically. And, at the same time, to build our “individual” aspect, to be alone with Hashem, to have *d’veykus* in Hashem. (*from Bilvavi On The Parsha*)

The more a person develops the power of the “alone” - the deeper and more genuine his connections to others will be.

Q & A SELF-WORTH

QUESTION In yeshiva, there are some people whom I'm very afraid of and intimidated of, for whatever reason. There are also people whom I very much want to be respected by, and I keep wishing that these people would acknowledge me more and give me a little *kavod* (honor). Because of this, I have a lot of uncomfortable feelings every time I see them. I wish I would get some more *kavod* from people learning in the same beis midrash as I do. I am suffering from a lot of anxiety from this, and I would like to know how I can free myself from these feelings and just be more settled in my mind.

ANSWER There are several parts in what you need to do. You need to acquire (1) The ability to be strongly connected to your thoughts, (2) A strong emotional connection to your inner self, (3) Focusing on what you're learning in the sefer in front of you, (4) Emotionally disconnect from others, for the time being when you're learning in the *beis midrash*, while making sure to stay balanced in your relationships with others. (5) You also need to be able to genuinely love others. (6) You need to lovingly accept the suffering that you have from your painful feelings in general. (7) More specifically, you need the ability to handle getting embarrassed from others. **QUESTION** For a few years already I am dealing with an issue of constant negative feelings, recurring thoughts of low self-worth, fears, and other negative emotions....I have a long way to go. Although I have learned how to accept, to a certain degree, that Hashem wanted me to have certain issues, it is still very hard for me, and it affects my learning, my *davening*, my daily schedule, and the development of my inner world. This has caused me much agony. I am considered a very successful and popular

bochur in my *yeshiva*. How can I deal with my situation? **ANSWER** The more that one believes, in his mind and heart, palpably, that it is only Hashem Who orchestrates everything that will ever happen, one's *nefesh* will develop a ready desire to do Hashem's will. From the awareness that only He is in charge, and that no human being can change or help him, unless Hashem allows it. Slowly, as one carries this awareness with him, his *nefesh* will become more connected with Hashem and be more cognizant of Hashem's presence. Then one will be able to do everything with the intention of wanting to do what Hashem wants, and not from a desire to please other people. The more that a person becomes concerned with doing Hashem's will - as opposed to being tied down to social approval and doing only whatever finds him favorable in the eyes of others - the more that one's *nefesh* becomes connected with Hashem. Gradually, one becomes calmer, more tranquil and more serene, for he will be exerting himself only according to his true capabilities, and only according to what Hashem wants from him [not what others want of him or whatever he perceives as what others want or expect from him].

A person can accept his suffering with love, because he knows that it is all for his good. At the same time, a person will be calmer and not demand more from himself that is beyond his current level and he will only act according to his actual capabilities. Slowly, with *siyata d'shmaya*, the crushing feelings of low self-worth, fears and anxieties, etc. will be removed, and one will become freed from these negative thoughts that had previously been plaguing his

Q & A SELF-WORTH

actions and feelings. May you find true peace, with health in your *guf* and *nefesh*, through constant spiritual growth, amidst a settled mind, tranquility, and joy. **QUESTION** It is already many years that I'm suffering tremendously, from being hypersensitive to facial expressions of others, and of what another person is thinking about me, why the other person didn't say "Good Morning" or "Gut Shabbos" to me, why he didn't smile at me, why he doesn't look happy to see me, etc. I go crazy trying to figure out what my friends and neighbors really think about me. Many times my greetings to others are met with silence, as if the other didn't notice me or isn't interested in greeting me, and this drives me nuts. These constant disappointments with others will bother me for the entire day. I feel like Haman, when he said "All of this not worth anything to me" just because Mordechai wouldn't bow down to him. I don't know why I'm like this, but I suffer so much anxiety from this, every single day. Is there any advice that can help me? **ANSWER** The inner perspective to have is, that whenever one meets other people, a person should never treat the facial expressions of another to be a reflection of the other's opinion of him. This is because everyone has a huge world going on inside themselves, which includes their physical issues, their emotional issues, their health, their financial situation, their problems with their own *middos* that they struggle with, their various moods, etc. You should not make yourself be dependent on the moods of other people, because everyone has

their various situations and challenges that they are going through.

It is recommended for you to find one or two friends whom you feel you can create a deep connection with. This is where you should concentrate your emotional energy on, by smiling at the other and the like. As for anyone else you meet, you can greet them respectfully, but don't try to build a deep connection with them, and don't expect anyone to react warmly to you. As for your need to have a deep connection with others, you can receive this need from one or two close friends of yours.

Besides the above, it is worthwhile for a person to know that **the more a person gains an inward connection with his own inner world, with his *neshamah* (soul), the less he will feel emotionally dependent on others**, and even more so, he will become more connected with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

Also, one needs to make sure that if he has a very sensitive nature like this, of "leeching" on others [for emotional closeness], he needs to balance himself with an ability to become "strong." as the Sages teach that one needs to be *koshoh k'erez*, "tough as cedar-wood tree." When one has the balance between sensitivity and toughness, he saves himself the pain of reacting to others. When a person lacks this balance, he becomes overly sensitive because he hasn't developed his inner strength yet, so he will react to his perception of what others are thinking about him. ■ *from the Bilvavi Q & A archive*

Join our active email list: subscribe@bilvavi.net

Audio classes, transcripts, translations online at www.bilvavi.net

Original audio files available on "Kol haLashon" Israel 073.295.1245 | USA 718.521.5231

Questions on any subject in english or hebrew: rav@bilvavi.net or online www.question.bilvavi.net

TO SPONSOR AN ISSUE PLEASE CONTACT US AT [INFO@BILVAVI.NET](mailto:info@bilvavi.net)