

Bilvavi

בלבבי
משכן
אבנה

PREPARING FOR SHAVUOS – THE TWO YEARNINGS

When we prepare for the time of the giving of the Torah during *Sefiras HaOmer*, we should know clearly that we are heading towards and looking forward to preparing to meet the King, Who reveals Himself when the Torah is being given.

Every year, when Shavuos returns, the special *ohr* (light) of *Matan Torah*, the giving of the Torah, is returning with it. So it is not just the ‘time’ of our history when the Torah was given - the entire event of standing at Har Sinai returns again! And that also means that “Our desire to see our King,” רצוננו לראות את מלכינו, is also returning each year, on Shavuos. But in order to truly receive it, we have to be *aware* of it and *prepare*, inwardly, for it.

Chazal said that the entire point of awaiting for the era of Mashiach is so that we can be free to learn Torah all day undisturbed. But it doesn't end there. There is also the desire to “see our King”. When a person is missing this yearning, he is not yet yearning for the purpose of Creation which he is supposed to be longing for. The yearning for more Torah, without a yearning for Hashem, is half the equa-

tion, and it misses the whole point. A person may be spending his life learning Torah and doing all the *mitzvos*, but he is not searching for Hashem throughout all of it. He yearns for more and more revelation of Torah, but he is blank from yearnings for Hashem! So we must know that these are two different yearnings to have, the yearning for more Torah in the world and the yearning for Hashem's revelation on the world, which are both equally important.

A person has to yearn for both the revelation of Torah, as well as the revelation of Hashem

The truth is that, everything is ultimately rooted in Hashem. The Torah and Hashem are intertwined, because “Hashem and the Torah are *chad* (one).” But a person does not necessarily see his Torah learning as being “one” with Hashem. That is why a person has to yearn for both the revelation of Torah, as well as the revelation of Hashem.

We must certainly yearn to reach higher levels and to know more and more Torah, but that is not everything. The greater part of our *avodah* in this world is to yearn for the revelation of Hashem. The whole entire purpose of Creation is that Hashem's Name be revealed in the world. We must

keep moving back and forth between these two yearnings, revelation for more Torah and revelation of Hashem in the world, and integrate these two yearnings together.

There is a deep place in our *nefesh* (soul), which is described by the Rambam as “the desire for Hashem’s Name”. Meaning to say, we can awaken in ourselves a yearning for Hashem. Not only does the thought of His existence awaken this yearning, but even the mention of His mere name can awaken it. “לשמך ולזכרך תאות נפש”, “*For Your Name and mention, is the desire of [my] soul*” – even the mention of Hashem’s Name can awaken our yearning for Him.

There is a concept of “pain of the *Shechinah*”. The *Shechinah* mourns the tremendous *chilul Hashem*, the tremendous empty void in our Creation, the fact that people do not recognize Hashem. On a simple level, the *Shechinah* mourns the situation that so many *neshamos* aren’t keeping Torah and *mitzvos* and don’t know of Hashem.

But there is also a deeper pain of the *Shechinah*, where the *Shechinah* mourns people who know of *ruchniyus* and yearn for Torah, but they don’t have a desire for Hashem, they aren’t revealing the yearning to see our King.

Especially during these days, when we prepare for the Torah, we need to reveal this yearning, the desire to see our King. Along with it, it must cause us to feel pain over the

fact that Hashem’s Presence is not yet revealed on the world.

This is a truth that often evades us, and it is hidden even from those who seek *ruchniyus*, who are not always in touch with the desire to seek Hashem. May we be *zocheh*, that we progress in our *avodah* throughout life, especially as we prepare for the time of receiving the Torah and that all of *Klal Yisrael*, as well as the entire world, should witness the revelation of Hashem in the world. (*Tefillah_0159*)

There are people who yearn for more Torah revealed on the world, but they don’t aspire for revelation of Hashem in the world. And on the other extreme, there are also people who yearn for the revelation of Hashem on the world, but they don’t yearn for the revelation of Torah to come to the world. Either of these views is missing balance.

The *Shechinah* mourns the tremendous *chilul Hashem*, the tremendous empty void in our Creation, the fact that people do not recognize Hashem.

We need to integrate the two yearnings together. We need to yearn for the revelation of His Presence in this world, which is the entire purpose of Creation. We also need to yearn that His *chochmah*, His wisdom, the Torah, which is the primary way that reveals Hashem’s Presence to the world be revealed in the world. And when that revelation will come to the world, we will all see how “Hashem, Yisrael, and the Torah are all *chad* (one).” (*Tefillah_0121*)

QUESTION If I love another Jew because I want to have a connection and a friendship with that person, is that called *ahavas Yisrael*? Or is this called being ego-centered and just out for my own emotional needs? And what about in a case where there are both aspects, where I want connection with the other person but I also want to give love and respect to the other person. I also want to give my friend all of his needs, and I *daven* for him and I worry for him and I am *moser nefesh* to go to his *simchos*? Is that called *ahavas Yisrael*, even though I'm ultimately in this relationship so that I can get my emotional needs from him so that I can feel like I have a true friend?

ANSWER As long as you are trying to get something from another person, your relationship with the other is not coming from true *ahavas Yisrael* (because it is not being motivated by your love for him, but from your own needs). And in a case where you are needy of the other but you also want to give to the other in some way, it is not yet *ahavas Yisrael*, since it is limited only to the person you are giving to. It is only a “spark,” a *nitzotz*, of *ahavas Yisrael*, but it is not yet actual *ahavas Yisrael*.

QUESTION I become disgusted with the negative traits I see in other Jews and I find it very hard to love them...how can I work on *ahavas Yisrael* when I notice glaring faults in others?

ANSWER How do you love others – do you love others only based on the qualities you see in them? The general way to overcome your disgust you feel towards others is by setting aside some quiet time to yourself and concentrate on how much you would want to love that person. First, think about a person whom you find it easier to love, and concentrate on how much you love for him, so

that you can increase your love for him. After concentrating on the love you feel towards that person, you will find that you love that person even more in your actual day-to-day life. When you realize that, you can now do this with all other people you know. It is better to try focusing on one person at a time, as opposed to concentrating on how much you love the general whole of *Klal Yisrael*, because you cannot grab too many high levels at once. Instead, it is better to focus on increasing love towards one person at a time.

QUESTION If a person unfortunately feels a lot of hatred for others, and he hates anyone who disagrees with his views, etc. and now he wants to work on *ahavas Yisrael* (loving a Jew), can he work simultaneously on removing his hatred as well as on increasing his love for other Jews? Or does he first need to remove his hatred and only after that he can awaken in himself a love for other Jews?

ANSWER The Rambam (*Hilchos De'os 2:2*) describes the way of fixing character faults: “What is the way for them to be healed? If one has an angry temperament, we tell him that if someone strikes him or curses him, he shouldn't feel any excitement towards the other. Have him practice this for a long time, until the anger is uprooted from his heart.” The same rule applies to fixing all negative traits: if one is at one extreme, he needs to go to the other extreme, and behave like this for a long time, until he eventually returns to the good path, which is the “middle point” between the two extremes of each character trait. With regards to the issue you are asking about, hatred – since the opposite of hatred is love, the way to heal the negative hatred is by working on acquiring love [for another Jew]. However, if you find this impossible to do, you can first keep your focus on ridding

yourself from hatred, and along with this, you should also try to work a little bit on loving another Jew.

QUESTION How I can remove my *sinas chinam* (baseless hatred) for others? How do I overcome these negative feelings towards others?

ANSWER (1) Learn about the ways of how to reveal *ahavas Yisrael*, and when you “do good,” that is how you “keep away from evil.” This concept was explained by the Baal Shem Tov, that “*sur m’ra*” (keeping away from bad) happens through *aseh tov* (doing good). (2) In addition, try to figure out what is motivating your dislike towards the person. Generally, disliking others stems from egotism, and more specifically, each person can clash with another’s personality, so try to figure out which aspect of the other’s personality is clashing with your particular personality. (3) Furthermore, it is important to change the way you view people. Stop wanting and thinking that everyone needs to be how you think they should be, and also, stop wishing that everyone was perfect. Hashem created every person with his particular flaws, and everything Hashem made is perfect, so Hashem wants the world to be full of imperfect people. (4) Finally, train yourself to like things that aren’t perfectly your taste [and this will also bring you to like people who aren’t your taste].

QUESTION What does it mean to have real, deep *ahavas Yisrael*?

ANSWER To love them without based on any calculations. Above logical reasoning. Each person is different at how much they feel and

recognize love for others. Until they can connect to the source of all souls where everyone is actually one.

QUESTION When I see another acting abusive or mean towards others, do I need to separate between the person does and who he is, meaning that I should recoil from what the person does but I should still love him as a person?

ANSWER Yes. And sometimes you should not think about what other does at all: “*I do not see sin in Yaakov.*” You should continue to love the person, unless they are truly evil through and through. And even very evil people (such as the souls of the Erev Rav) have good parts in them which you should find, because there is always a spark of good found in everything.

QUESTION Should I just not try to understand others when they act incorrectly, since it’s not my job to judge people and figure them out?

ANSWER Excellent. Don’t even start judging others and ‘seeing’ if you are able to judge them favorably - *Chazal* said “Do not judge your friend until you reach his place,” and the Kotzker said that you will never reach his place, so don’t judge him.

QUESTION How do we teach children to become opened to loving others, to converse with others, to include others in a game they are playing, to help others, and to let others have their way?

ANSWER By telling them a story of another who acted that way, which makes it more experiential for them. ■ *from the Bilvavi Q & A archive*

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