

FINDING THE NEEDLE-SIZED OPENING

Parshas Chukas discusses the process of *taharah* (purification) that removes *tumah*. The word *tumah* (becoming defiled) is based on the word *timtum* (blockage). Whenever a person does an *aveirah*, there is a resulting *timtum*, a blockage, which makes it harder for him to feel *ruchniyus* and to reach higher levels, due to *tumah* created from *aveiros* (sins). Both the *daas* (intellect) and the *lev* (heart) of a person can become infected by *timtum* that results from *aveiros*, which blocks the mind and heart from thinking properly in the Torah and from growing to higher levels of *ruchniyus*. We need to purify both our *lev*/heart and our *daas*/intellect.

Generally speaking, in order to **purify the heart**, there is actually a special *tefillah* for this, **וטהר לבנו לעבדך באמת**, “*And purify our hearts to serve You in truth*”. But “*tefillah* accomplishes half”, so we still need to do the other half – we have our own personal *avodah* to do, to purify the heart.

Even though *timtum halev* causes a person to lose sensitivity towards *ruchniyus*, he does not become completely blocked. There is a small crack of *kedushah* that he will be able to find himself, and once he finds it, that crack can be widened and then one can go further from there. This is because Hashem says, **פתחו לי כחודו של מחט**, “Open for Me an opening the size of a needle, and I will open for You an entranceway.”

We can begin to find it by becoming aware of the purity of our *neshamah*. Even the worst sinners in the Jewish people, when faced with the test of giving up their lives for Hashem, were willing to sacrifice their lives for Him.

So there is never such a thing as total *timtum halev*, even when the *timtum halev* is very much dominant. There is always a small crack of holiness that can shine through, no matter how many *aveiros* a person committed.

In order to find that small opening, a person needs to find at least one quality that he has, exposing it and becoming aware of it. Now he has the small “opening” that he can use, to purify his heart.

Timtum can also be blocking not only our heart from being sensitive to *ruchniyus*, it can also be blocking our *daas*, our intellect, from understanding our learning. So we also need to **purify our daas/intellect**. A person’s *daas* may have become infected from false viewpoints and improper *hashkafos*, preventing his mind from being aligned with the Torah’s way of thinking. Purifying the *daas* is when we gain the ability called *seichel hayashar*, a proper intellect, which enables a person to think clearly and logically, from a pure mind.

When it comes to learning Torah, one needs to find the small, “needle-sized opening” that’s already existent in him (just as when it comes to acquiring new levels of *ruchniyus*). For example, when a person has a difficulty when learning a Gemara, he should become aware of “What did I not understand until now, and what points in the *sugya* am I clear about, until this point?” Like this, he is becoming connected to what he does know. This is how he finds the small opening, and then he can develop his understanding further, from there. While learning the *sugya* of the Gemara, the parts of the *sugya* which we don’t understand are the areas where our *da’as* is being blocked, so

one’s thinking will be clouded when it comes to those points. But many times, when you focus on the points of the *sugya* that you do understand, this small little “opening” leads you further into understanding the *sugya*, and then even the difficult points become understandable to you.

In whatever a person is trying to acquire, a person needs to find how there is some small level of it already existent in him. If a person wants to improve in his *ruchniyus* (spiritual level) and also in his Torah learning, he needs to find what he has already gained so far. In your learning, find any points that you have already understood and which you are clear about. In your *avodas Hashem*, find any qualities that are already existent in you. You need to become aware of what you *have*, not just where you are trying to get to. This is how you gain the small opening that will lead you further into greater heights in how well you understand what you learn in the Torah and in your qualities of *avodas Hashem*. (When it comes to learning Torah, you will still need to exert yourself in your learning, of course, but the gain will be that your learning will be built upon the good points that you have already exposed from within you.)

In whatever quality or level or point you are trying to acquire, you first need to see how it’s already existent in you to some level - you need to find the small, needle-sized “opening” – **פתחו לי כחודו של מחט**, “Open for Me an opening the size of a needle”, where Hashem promises that He will take care of the rest. Living in this way enables one to leave *tum’ah* (defilement), and enter into *taharah* (purity). (based on *Bilvavi On The Parsha*)

Q&A – OLAM HABa

QUESTION Does every Jew get into Olam HaBa in the end, after everything is over? If a Jew needs to go through *tikkunim* (repair) through being the suffering in Gehinnom will he always get into Olam HaBa (World To Come) in the end? **ANSWER** Yes, there is an eventual end to the suffering, and afterwards, there is an awesome bliss that follows.

QUESTION What does it feel like for the soul during all the time it doesn't get into Olam HaBa? **ANSWER** The Maharal says that the soul feels *heb-dair*, a sense of being absent from everything. The soul becomes painfully aware of all of the illumination (*ohr*) that it is missing.

QUESTION Even when a person loses Olam HaBa, that is only in the outer layers of the soul, but the deepest part, the Yechidah, is eternal and it always get into Olam HaBa. But what does it feel like when only the Yechidah part of the soul is in Olam HaBa, but the rest of a person's soul layers (Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah, and Chayah) aren't there with him? Is it like the analogy the Chofetz Chaim gave, that *mitzvos* are like clothing to a person, so a person who lacks mitzvos will feel in Heaven like a person who is missing his clothing? **ANSWER** It is not just like a person who doesn't have clothing from lack of *mitzvos*. Rather, it is an absence of light for one's soul.

QUESTION How much should a person be thinking about these matters? **ANSWER** It is proper to think about it on one's own level.

QUESTION Is there a Rambam that says that a person shouldn't think about these things because it can lead to insanity? **ANSWER** The Rambam says that in Moreh Nevuchim III, 21. However, now that all of the events of the future have been explained by those who explained the hidden part of Torah (Kaballah), a person is allowed to delve into such matters, each person on his own level.

QUESTION Is a goy able to reach a greater level of Olam HaBa than a Jew? **ANSWER** A Jew's soul is rooted in a higher place than a gentile's soul. This cannot change. However, in the active dimension, it is possible for a gentile who keeps the 7 Noachide laws to be more spiritual than a Jew who, for example, becomes an apostate. *Chazal* state that when a Jew becomes wicked, he is able to fall into the lowest abysses of defilement [further than where a gentile can fall]. But, even when a Jew falls to the lowest possible levels, he will ultimately traverse one purification process after another, until he is eventually returned to his root. Therefore, it is very possible to have a gentile who is externally more purified than a Jew. But in the dimension of *pnimiyus* (the inner spiritual dimension), it is not that way: A Jew who keeps mitzvos is able to become connected to the Creator

either in an obvious matter or in a more hidden manner, and this *d'veykus* that a Jew has with Hashem will always be on a higher level than the levels that a goy can reach. However, it is very possible for it to appear externally that a goy has become purified in his being, and closer to Hashem, whereas we can find Jews who aren't. There are instances where a goy can become "enlightened" and realize how the entire universe is unified under Hashem. However, the *d'veykus* with Hashem that a Jew can reach, through doing the *mitzvos*, is always on a higher level than any connection with Hashem that a goy can reach, even for a Jew who did the *mitzvos* by rote, and this is because the *d'veykus* to Hashem that a Jew reaches is always rooted in a higher source than a goy's.

QUESTION Sefer Shomer Emunim and others revealed that most of the souls in Klal Yisrael in the final generation are from the Erev Rav - and the Rav clarified that this means that most people today have a "spark" (*nitzotz*) of Erev Rav in their soul, as opposed to having an actual Erev Rav soul. But all of us also have a "*tzaddik*" part of ourselves, a part of us that is completely good. If we choose to let the *tzaddik* part of ourselves be in control, does that also elevate the "Erev Rav" part within us to kedushah? **ANSWER** [The evil parts of our being need to become] erased, becoming included in kedushah/holiness, through the secret of revealing our soul's deep yearning for Hashem, to be willing to be burned up and destroyed so that we can go back to Hashem – to reach the state of *hiskalelus*, becoming integrated with Hashem.

QUESTION If a Jew falls into the *tumah* of the Erev Rav through being connected to Internet, and if he doesn't give it up before the Geulah and loses Olam HaBa, how can it be that he becomes part of the Erev Rav? What happens to his neshamah? **ANSWER** For anyone who remains intrinsically connected to the 50th level of *tumah*- the internet], it becomes revealed "retroactively" that he was never part of the Jewish people.

QUESTION If a Jew *chas v'shalom* doesn't withstand the "final test" (the internet), falling into the "50th level of *tumah*", which makes him "fall into the side of the Erev Rav", preventing him from Olam HaBa– can he still get in to Olam HaBa at a later point? **ANSWER** If one merely "fell" into the Erev Rav [meaning that he didn't become intrinsically and emotionally connected to the Internet], then it is very possible that he eventually gets into Olam HaBa (either at the 7th, 8th, 9th or 10th century).

QUESTION What is the reward for those who choose not to have Internet in their lives?

ANSWER The *ohr haganuz* (the hidden light stored away for the *tzaddikim* in the future). (*from the Bilvavi Q & A archive*).