

ANTI-SEMITISM

QUESTION As Anti-Semitism continues to rise, it seems that we especially need to *daven* to Hashem to be protected from our enemies. What is the proper way to *daven* these days, during solitude, for the protection of the Jewish people from its enemies? Should we *daven* that our enemies should be destroyed? Should we *daven* that our Father in Heaven should prevent them? Or should we *daven* that we should be protected from their evil schemes?

ANSWER These enemies are the “birth contractions” preceding the Redemption. Thus the main purpose [of Anti-Semitism] is for the Redemption to come speedily, now, amidst pleasantness and joy. We should view our enemies from this inner perspective. The main thing, above all, is that we should do complete *teshuvah*. Our root enemy is the *yetzer hora* (the evil inclination), the internal enemy that resides in a person and who has control over the person. Although it seems that it is only our “external” enemies who are in the lead [it is actually a manifestation of how our “inner” enemy [the *yetzer hora*] is at the lead]. Therefore, we need to place extra emphasis on how to fight our “spiritual” enemy, the enemy who is fighting us on a spiritual level. As the Sages said, “One who gets another to sin is worse than the one who kills him.”



[Editor's Note: refer to the *derasha* of Tefillah_0162_How We View The Nations]

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METZORA - ALONE

The Solitude of the Metzora

In *Parshas Metzora*, the Torah states that a *metzora* (a leper) “sits alone, outside the camp”. The *Gemara*¹ says that a *metzora* has caused a rift between husband and wife and between man and his friend [through speaking words of slander to them about each other], which caused separation. Therefore, the Torah punishes the *metzora* measure-for-measure by making him dwell alone, outside the camp, where he is separated from society.

The Torah's punishment for the *metzora* is the downside of being alone, but *Chazal* have taught us that every power can be used for evil as well as for good. So if it is bad to be alone, there can also be a good and holy side to being alone.

There are several instances where a person is alone. For example, one must relieve himself in a lavatory, a room set aside for bodily functions, so that he can do so alone. The *Gemara* says that King Shaul was especially modest when relieving himself, by defecating only in a cave within a cave.² This was a kind of “alone” that stemmed from the trait of modesty.

However, the above kind of “alone” is for hiding bodily functions, which man is ashamed of, so it is not the holiest use of “alone”.

In contrast to this, we find a holier kind of “alone”, exemplified by the *Kohen Gadol* in the *Kodesh Kodashim*, on Yom Kippur. No one was allowed there on Yom Kippur except for the *Kohen Gadol* who was completely alone with Hashem. This was the highest function of the power of “alone”.

The Two Sides of Man

Chazal say, “Therefore, man was created alone”.³ Adam was first created alone. This was the inner essence of man – to be alone. At a later point, Hashem said, “*It is not good for man to be alone*”,⁴ and He created woman as a helpmate for man. This became the external function of man: to live with companionship. But the internal function of man - the initial form of existence of man - is to be “alone”.

This function of man - “alone” - was not lost after man received a companion. Rather, it remains as an inner power in man which is still functioning even though it is hidden. All people, throughout all the generations, retained this inner function of man to be “alone”, for “man was created alone.” The *avodah* of every person, on one hand, is to develop this inner space of being “alone”. Simultaneously, man has the task of being a companion to others. The *Gemara* says

1 Arachin 17a
2 Berachos 62b

3 Sanhedrin 37a
4 Beraishis 2:18

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that it is wrong to learn Torah alone, that one must learn Torah with a study partner.⁵ In the depths of our soul, we need to develop the soul's power of "alone", man's "individual" aspect, but at the same time, we also need to build connections with others. You are commanded to love another Jew like yourself, and therefore, when you are learning Torah, you need to learn Torah with others, and not by yourself.

These are the two major, opposite areas in the soul which need to be accessed: the power of alone, and the power of companionship. One needs to build the power of "alone" - in a holy manner, that is - and on the other hand, one needs to be able to connect to others.

True Friendship With Others

Therefore, let us understand the following. If a person does not build in himself the power of "alone", his connections to others will not be genuine. Instead, they will be the kinds of connections that remove a person from his world, such as the negative traits of "Jealousy, desire and honor [which] remove a person from his world"⁶.

When a person connects to others only in a superficial manner, these connections turn him from being an internal person into an external kind of person who acts superficially.

When a person has no inner place in his soul of "alone" - meaning that he is not accessing this power in himself, and he is just taking life as it comes - his connections to others will be only external and superficial. They will be stemming from a lack of connection to his own inner world - they won't be genuine, truthful connections that stem from the depths of his soul.

To give an example, a child cannot really connect to others. A child lives for himself, which is a form of "alone".

This is not the holy use of alone, rather the impaired, self-absorbed use of "alone". A child cannot have mature connections with others. All he can do is be dependent on his mother for care and affection. This is a kind of *bittul* (self-nullification), which is some kind of connection, but it is not a connection of love for another person, which is only possible with two mature adults.

When growing up, a child learns how to connect to others, mainly through the power of speech, which is the force that enables conversation and connection with others. But if one has not as yet developed his power of "alone", which the Sages were referring to when they said "Therefore, man was created [an] individual", his connections to others will be on an immature level, and he will not have true, genuine friendships with others.

Therefore, Hashem has created man in a way that he must access both of these aspects - the power of "alone", and the power of connection to others.

... Together, and Alone

The personal avodah of man to reach *d'veykus* (attachment) with Hashem contains two deep aspects. One part of it is to connect with all of *Klal Yisrael*, which was the state of Har Sinai, when all of the people received the Torah together.

The other part is to use the light of Moshe Rabbeinu, who ascended alone to Heaven, receiving the Torah alone, from Hashem.

Each soul contains both of these deep aspects. A person can connect to Hashem through the Torah that was given to all of *Klal Yisrael*. However, the deeper aspect is to be like Moshe Rabbeinu, who received the Torah privately from Hashem; the Rambam says that everyone can reach a level that resembles Moshe Rabbeinu. Reb

Elchonon Wasserman in the name of the Chofetz Chaim wrote about this extensively.

A person needs to use both of these aspects together. On the one hand, a person should learn Torah in the company of others who exert themselves in Torah, and to connect himself with the company of Torah scholars. However, a person also needs to develop his own inner world, by connecting to his own personal share in the Torah, and to activate the potential of his inner world.

But even more so, as a result of combining the above two aspects of the soul together, there is a greater level as well that one can reach: a person can reach a level in which he stands "alone" with Hashem, and resembles the individuality of Hashem, so to speak.

Besides for revealing the power of "alone" in the soul, there is a higher level one can reach through it, and that is to discover the power of "Moshe Rabbeinu" within, on his own level. Moshe is called the "faithful shepherd", who had true *ahavas Yisrael* to all souls of the Jewish people - a genuine connection to each Jew.

Therefore, the more a person develops the power of "alone", the more his connections to others will improve, as a byproduct. Then a person will merit rectifying the power of "alone", of the impaired kind of "alone" of the *metzora*, who sits alone, outside the camp - and in its place, to reveal the true "alone" - which is balanced by an ability to connect to all others.

The outlook of a person who follows the ways of our teachers is to be connected with others, out of a general love for each Jew, and on a particular level, to be able to learn Torah with others while simultaneously building the "individual" aspect of their own soul, with true, complete *d'veykus*, in the Creator. (BILVAVI ON THE PARSHA)

5 Berachos 63b

6 Avos 4:21

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A person loves another Jew with his heart, and that is how he fulfills the *mitzvah* of “Love your friend like yourself.” You can also fulfill the *mitzvah* by doing acts of kindness for another Jew. But if you do an act of kindness for another Jew and there is some disliking in your heart towards him, you are not fulfilling the *mitzvah* of “Love your friend like yourself”, and you may even be committing a sin just by having negative emotions of dislike towards another Jew: “Do not hate your brother in your heart.” (Vayikra 19:17) It is the same when it comes to all other soul-related *mitzvos*: These *mitzvos* are fulfilled by using our soul, either by using the soul directly, or by doing certain actions that awaken the inner emotions of the soul.

This is explained by Rabbeinu Bachye, in his sefer Chovos HaLevovos, where the author explains about heart-dependent *mitzvos*, and he explains that there are two different kinds of *mitzvos*: “duties of limbs”, the *mitzvos* that we fulfill through our physical body, as well as “obligations of the heart”, the *mitzvos* that we fulfill through our heart: through our soul. That is why the author called his sefer “Chovos HaLevovos,” the duties of the heart. (It is known that Rav Chaim Soloveichik told his son the Brisker Rov that the sefer Chovos HaLevovos is the “Shulchan Aruch” (Code of Law) for all heart-related *mitzvos*.) In the introduction to the sefer, the Chovos HaLevovos writes that at first he thought that soul-related obligations are not explicitly written in the Torah, and that is the reason why there are people who think that there is no obligation to keep these *mitzvos*, certainly not as much as action-related *mitzvos*.

During the time when the Chovos HaLevovos lived, there were those who mistakenly thought that serving Hashem involves actions of *mitzvos* alone, and that there is no obligation to serve the Creator with the soul and there is no need to learn about the *mitzvos* that are heart-related. This is because they viewed heart-related *mitzvos* as simply commendable spiritual qualities which they thought of as optional.

The Chovos HaLevovos said that he later discovered that these *mitzvos* were not optional, because there were verses of the Torah and statements of the Sages that were filled with explicit obligations of heart-dependent *mitzvos*. He explained in his sefer about the great obligation of keeping these internal, heart-dependent *mitzvos*. And he was puzzled at his generation for not being aware of these duties of the heart, which were no less obligatory than the action-related *mitzvos*.

How Using The Soul Affects Quality of Our Mitzvos

Besides for fulfilling the heart-dependent *mitzvos* which require us to make use of our soul, the fulfillment of doing the action-dependent *mitzvos* also depends on how much we are using our soul. The soul is the source of our will, and that is a factor that will lead to either doing or not doing a *mitzvah* [If we want to do a *mitzvah*, we are closer to doing the *mitzvah*, but if we don't want to do a *mitzvah*, we may be lazy and not do it].

Also, the quality of how we do the *mitzvos* is affected by how much we are using our soul or not. In order to do a *mitzvah l'sheim shomayim* (for the sake of Heaven and not for personal motives), or to do a *mitzvah* out of love or fear of Hashem, or to do it joyously, or to do it carefully, it all depends on how much we are using the soul's abilities. (To be even more precise, all of the *mitzvos* without exception contain an inner and soul dimension to them. Thus, working with our soul is a factor that is needed when it comes to all *mitzvos*.) This is in line with the idea mentioned earlier, that in order to serve Hashem completely, we need to combine action with soul. The Sages taught that the word *mitzvah* means more than just a “commandment”, it also means *tzavta*, “connection” – because every *mitzvah* is meant to fuse our actions with our soul together, so that we become more connected to Hashem.

Every Person Serves Hashem In His Unique Way

In spite of the fact that every able-minded Jew is obligated to serve Hashem in action and in soul, in actuality every Jew serves Hashem in a different way. This is because each person is unique, with a particular structure of abilities in his personal soul that are different from another's. As *Chazal* taught, “Just as all faces are different, so are their ways of thinking different.” (Talmud Bavli Berachos 58a) In order to serve Hashem in a way that's aligned and unique with your soul, you need to learn about the structure of the soul and the faculties contained in it.

Here is an example of what we mean. Consider the *mitzvah* to do *chessed* (kindness) with others. Every person is able to help others and be kind to them in some way, whether by giving others money, food, various remedies, etc. But if one doesn't recognize his personal soul, he may be doing a lot less *chessed* with others than he is really able to. Or, he might be trying to do *chessed* in areas which are not suitable for his particular personality. Or, he might not do any *chessed* at all, for all kinds of reason that he has. [That is the case when one doesn't recognize his soul. He doesn't know what the limits of his potential are, what he

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can do and what he cannot do]. Another kind of person may help others by giving shiurim or through other ways of benefitting a lot of people, but if he has never yet recognized his personal soul, he may think that he needs to do *chessed* with them in other ways which are not suitable to him and which don't utilize his potential, such as by trying to aid others financially, or by trying to cook food for others - when really he should be spending his energy on other forms of *chessed*.

There is also a third case scenario. If a person recognizes that doing extreme *chessed* for others is not within his capabilities - he simply doesn't have the time or energy or capabilities to open up a *gemach* - then he is aware that opening up a *gemach* simply isn't for him to do. He might discover other areas of *chessed* that he's good at, such as by having encouraging conversations with others, or by giving advice to others, etc.

The idea is that when it comes to any of the mitzvos, we are able to know how we can best fulfill them, based on how well we recognize our own soul. The point is not to make it easier for ourselves and feel that we are exempt ourselves from certain mitzvos, *chas v'shalom!* Rather, the point is to do the mitzvos with greater precision and accuracy. Thus, in order to serve the Creator and fulfill His mitzvos with greater precision, one needs to recognize his personal soul, and serve Hashem according to his unique capabilities - and limitations.

There are also certain unique aspects which Hashem has given each person, and one needs to serve Him with those unique faculties. Getting even more specific, each person has a particular unique strong point, which is connected with his or her personal *shoresh neshamah* (soul root), and it is upon a person to discover what his unique point is and to activate it from its potential. This is needed in order for one to completely and fully serve the Creator. Meaning, besides for the mitzvos which every Jew is obligated in, each Jew as an individual also has one particular task to fulfill, which Hashem has chosen him for. Activating one's unique potential - using your strongest point - is what brings honor to Hashem, and it is your unique task and purpose on this world. It is also your personal soul of vitality and joy on this world, and it is your personal contribution to the world.

Developing Our Soul's Abilities

In order for a person to serve the Creator and do the mitzvos, one must learn about and recognize how to serve Hashem and how to fulfill the mitzvos, and then he will have the means to do so. It is clear to any sensible person that in order to fulfill the mitzvos properly, one needs to learn about the details of the mitzvos, and if one doesn't learn about what he needs to do, either he won't be able to do the mitzvos at all, or he won't be able to fulfill them properly. If one wants to fulfill the mitzvah of tefillin, for example, he needs to make sure he procures a good kosher pair of tefillin, so that he can fulfill the mitzvah. If he wants to fulfill the mitzvah of sitting in a succah, he needs to make sure that his succah gets built.

It's the same when it comes to the mitzvos that we fulfill with our soul. One needs to know the halachos and the details of these heart-dependent mitzvos, in order to fulfill them properly. (This *sefer* does not explain the halachos of the heart-related mitzvos.) That is why one must recognize his soul abilities, build them and develop them, and properly utilize them from their potential state, so that one will have the means to fulfill the heart-related mitzvos of the Creator (As explained in the works of *mussar*).

For example, if one doesn't know how to believe in himself or if he doesn't trust anyone, he is deficient in the soul's ability to have *emunah* (belief and trust). How then will he be able to trust the Creator with perfect belief? Another example. If a person barely accesses his soul's ability to love others, how will he be able to fulfill the mitzvah of loving another Jew? A person who doesn't recognize his soul's powers will not know how to work with them, and he won't be able to serve the Creator either. By contrast, when one develops his soul's power to trust and he is using this ability properly, he can then trust the Creator. And when a person is in touch with his power to love and his using this power correctly, he can channel his love towards the Creator. When one recognizes the powers in his soul, he can work with them, repair them, and balance them, and channel them in his service towards the Creator.

Thus, developing the soul's powers is essentially the means that enables a person to serve the Creator and fulfill His mitzvos, and without it, a person cannot completely fulfill his duties to the Creator. [מהספר הכרה עצמית והעצמת הנפש]

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