



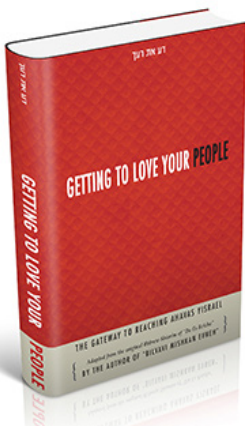
MEDINAS YISRAEL

QUESTION

The Chazon Ish said that the medinah (government in Israel) cannot last for more than 60-70 years. But we see that the medinah is still around, and they are soon giving out a vaccine [for corona], etc...?

ANSWER

The medinah is in the midst of falling apart, from within itself, and deeply – both in the spiritual sense and also in the actual sense.



IN BOOKSTORES SOON

This weekly parsha sheet is based on translations from HaRav Isamar Schwartz, Shlit"a the author of the Bilvavi & DaEs series. The Rav attended the Pachad Yitzhak Yeshiva of Rav Yonasan David, Shlit"a and graduated from the Ponovitch Yeshiva of Rav Gershon Edelstein, Shlit"a. The earliest of more than 50 sefarim of the Rav were enthusiastically endorsed by Rav Gamliel Rabinovitch, Shlit"a, Rav Moshe Sternbuch, Shlit"a, Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlit"a, the Tolna Rebbe, Shlit"a, Rav Moshe Mordechai Karp, Shlit"a, amongst others. Using an eclectic approach, the Rav's teachings speak to the hearts of Jews from all walks of life.

SELF-NULLIFICATION AT THE SEA

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, this statement means that the inner recesses of Lot were infused with the inner traits of Avraham Avinu who had taught him. It was this inner 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 which 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 *tum'ah* (defilement). The only way to be saved from the 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 a person today does not have *mesirus nefesh*, simply speaking, in order to do Hashem's will, he cannot survive our generation. The obligation that is upon us in our times is: to have total *mesirus nefesh* for Hashem.

Before the event of *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 the Sages always 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*?!

When a person is *davening*, it is because he wants a certain thing. He may want one thing, or more than one thing, to happen. He is trying to attain his *ratzon* (will), through praying to Hashem to get it. But at the sea, the people had the *avodah* to transcend any of their personal *ratzon*, and to arrive at total self-nullification (*bittul*), of having no personal *ratzon* at all. At the sea, their *avodah* was to come to the recognition that "I only want what Hashem wants. If Hashem's will is for me to live, then I want to live. If Hashem wills the opposite, then that is my will also."

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 loftier *avodah* to do. Now their *avodah* was to have absolute *mesirus nefesh*: to be willing to give up their souls entirely for Hashem, and to accept the will of Hashem wholeheartedly. When that is the case, there is no gain in *davening*, and it would only be detrimental to do so. בלבבי חלק ה' - עמי שנד - שנה

ACHAREI - STRIVING FOR CLOSENESS

The Deaths of Nadav and Avihu

In *Parashas Acharei Mos*, the Torah says that the two sons of Aharon [Nadav and Avihu] died in their “drawing close in front of Hashem”.

The *Ramchal* in the beginning of *Mesillas Yesharim* writes that the true self-completion of life is to reach *d'veykus* (attachment) with Hashem, and that this is what Dovid *HaMelech* said, “*And as for me, closeness to Hashem is good.*”¹ The purpose of Creation, on a general level, and the purpose of man specifically, who is called “crown of Creation”, is to reach closeness to Hashem.

This is what Nadav and Avihu died for. They reached what is described in the verse “*And as for me, closeness to Hashem is good*”, and since they had now reached this purpose, they left the world.

When Does Closeness Come?

If we take a look at the world superficially, we will see a myriad of creations, various actions and movements. But if we reflect on our view of the world, and we think into the words of *Chazal* that describe this, we see that there is nothing for us to do here in this world other than to reach closeness with Hashem. All creations, and man especially, exist in order to bring the world to its purpose, which is that all of Creation should reach closeness with Hashem.

Closeness with Hashem, according to the Sage Rabbi Pinchos ben Yair (explained in *sefer Mesillas Yesharim*), is not reached until the level that is called *kedushah* (holiness), which the *Ramchal* describes as a constant, uninterrupted connection in the Creator. It seems to us at first glance that the order of our *avodah* is Torah, then *zehirus* (watchfulness), *zerizus* (alacrity), etc., whereas *d'veykus* and closeness with

Hashem can only be reached at the very top of our ladder. That is what

it seems when we take a look at *sefer Mesillas Yesharim*, which delineates the steps of our ladder of growth. However, there is a deeper, truer perspective. When you draw close to something, it doesn't mean you are situated at that level. Closeness means that you have come closer from where you are now. The very movement of our life must be towards closeness with Hashem, until we truly reach Him – as is in the verse, “*Return, Yisrael, until Hashem your G-d.*”² At that highest level, a person joins the recognition of *tzaddikim*, who have *d'veykus* and closeness with Hashem.

Getting closer to Hashem means that one is directing his entire life towards Hashem. A person's deeds must be mainly directed towards closeness with Hashem. Although a person will inevitably encounter various spiritual failures, he still needs to keep directing all of his actions towards this goal: to get closer, and closer, and closer - to Hashem.

All Levels of Spiritual Progress are Dependent on the Light of Torah

To explain this in deeper terms, there is the root of our *emunah*, which is to believe with complete faith in the existence of Hashem and that He is the Creator of all beings. Then there is also the “light” of Hashem, which reveals His presence to us. Light serves to reveal the presence of something, and the revelation of Hashem in this world is called “His [Hashem's] light”. This is referring to the Torah, which is called “*Torah Ohr*”, “Torah of light”. The Torah is here to reveal the One who created this world.

When one has a superficial perspective, he might think that the light found in the Torah is for a purpose unto itself, and that it exists only to reveal the light of the Torah itself. But this is a subtle way of separating the Torah from Hashem. The entire concept of exertion in Torah study is to be connected with Hashem, “Hashem and the Torah are one”. The Torah reveals the existence of the Creator and

therefore it is called “Torah of light”, because it reveals Hashem.

Based upon the above, we can now understand what is meant by the order of steps laid out in *Mesillas Yesharim*, that Torah brings one to *zehirus*, and *zehirus* brings one to *zerizus*, etc. It does not simply mean that a person who acquires the level of *zehirus*, can then proceed to acquire the level of *zerizus*, etc. Rather, it means that the Torah is that which brings a person to each of these levels. Thus, the Torah that brings a person to the level of *zehirus* is the Torah that brings a person to *zerizus*, and which in turn brings a person to the level of *nekiyus*, etc.

The Torah is the spiritual light, Hashem's light, which serves to reveal Him. It is essentially the “light of the Torah” which brings a person to *zehirus*, and therefore even in *zehirus* there can be a revelation of Hashem. So *zehirus* is not just the “level” of *zehirus* – it is part of the steps in reaching closeness with Hashem. That means that even in the beginning of one's way, the Torah's light can accompany him and bring him to all of the levels he needs to acquire. A hint to this is that the word “*zehirus*” is from the word “*zohar*” (illumination), alluding to how the Torah's light is contained even in this first level.

If a person simply wants to gain the trait of *zehirus*, he may succeed in gaining this trait, but it will not be on a deep level. He will simply know how to become more careful. So a person may have acquired the level of *zehirus*, but only on the level of the “animal” soul. But when a person reaches *zehirus* due to the Torah's light which brings him to *zehirus*, this is not the *zehirus* of animals. This is light of the Torah! It is this *zehirus* which is from the word “*zohar*” which can bring him to the higher levels, of *zerizus* through *kedushah*. ... [FROM BILVAVI ON THE PARSHA]

1 *Tehillim* 25:28

2 *Hoshea* 14:2

SELF-RECOGNITION & SELF-ACTUALIZATION

The Gains of A Healthy, Developed Soul

In general, in order to serve the Creator in the most ideal way, one needs to strengthen and develop his soul, so that he will be in a healthy, uplifted state, as opposed to being in a shaky, unhealthy, and lowly state. When someone has a strongly developed soul, he has the following gains:

(1) The ability to work hard at serving the Creator, learning Torah, and fixing his character traits.

(2) He is not trapped in a prison-like state within the animalistic part of his soul, and it is within his ability to rise to higher soul-levels.

(3) He can activate his unique, strongest ability and direct it towards serving the Creator.

(4) He will save himself from the problem of losing spiritual progress that comes from emotional issues, weaknesses, and dismal periods of feeling brokenhearted.

(5) He will be able to fulfill the verse “And his heart was high in the ways of Hashem” – he will not suffer from low self-esteem and he won’t feel ashamed from others who ridicule his way of serving Hashem.

(6) He will be able to fulfill his purpose, with a sense of vitality and joy, and he won’t become self-absorbed in whatever he lacks, in what he’s missing, in his personal weaknesses, or in his sadness.

In order to make the most of our soul, one needs to recognize himself, in order to actualize the potential of his soul and use it correctly. And by the same token, in order for one to be subservient to the Creator, one needs to recognize his soul and bring out his potential. When one’s soul remains impaired, one does not have the maturity to nullify himself to the Creator, because it is as if there is no “I” here to be humbled to the Creator. One has to first uplift the state of his soul and be happy with himself, through self-recognition and actualizing the potential of the soul, and only after that can one be able to nullify himself to the Creator and submit to His will. The Sages taught “Give up your will for His will”, and there must first be desires of the person present in order for one to nullify those desires, out of deference to the Creator’s will.

The Soul Is The Means To Recognize The Creator

One of the main purposes in Creation is to recognize the Creator and His attributes. The fundamental way of

recognizing the Creator is through self-recognition, as it says, “And from my flesh I see G-d.” Meaning, after a person clearly recognizes the soul and its powers, he can progress further and recognize that his abilities are nothing but an offshoot of Hashem’s power, and even more so, the soul’s powers are merely garments that are used as a tool for Hashem’s power, revealed through the soul. This is how one can merit to recognize the One who said that the world will be – he can recognize the Creator’s power from within his own soul’s powers.

Do It For Your Own Good

An additional purpose of why Hashem created the world was for the purpose of benefitting His creations. “Hashem is the ultimate Good, and the way of good is to bestow good upon others.”

According to the simplest understanding, Hashem wills that every person should receive good. When one learns Torah and does the mitzvos, so that Hashem will benefit him in return, he is fulfilling the will of the Creator and he is serving Him. By the same token, Hashem wills that one should recognize his soul for the person’s own good, physically and spiritually, to benefit him both in this world and in the next. Thus, when one gains self-recognition, for his own benefit, he is fulfilling with will of the Creator and serving Him [when his intentions are for the sake of Heaven].

Self-Recognition and Battling The Evil Inclination

There is a part of a person which contains evil: the yetzer hora (evil inclination), also known as the forces of evil that are within a person, which one must wage war with. However, from a truthful perspective, we should not just view evil aspects of our character as nothing but absolute evil, and we should not view our inner soul work as just as a war with our evil inclination. That is only a superficial perspective. The inner perspective to have is that all of the abilities in our soul are good, and it is just that some parts of our soul are not revealed or balanced [and that is what we know as “evil” character within us]. The Hebrew word for evil is ra, from the word raua, “shaky”, implying that evil character is not intrinsically evil, it is just a shaky and unstable application of the soul’s power.

Thus, on one hand we need to work with our positive areas of character [which have already been revealed or which are already balanced], and on the other hand

SELF-RECOGNITION & SELF-ACTUALIZATION

we also need to reveal and balance the aspects of character that are in need of balancing, in order to complete the repair of our soul. In either case, whether one has a superficial perspective or the inner perspective, one must recognize his or her soul, in order to repair the parts of character that need to be fixed.

A Part of Learning Torah

From all that we have said thus far, we are seeing that there is a great need to learn and recognize the soul and to develop and strengthen the soul's faculties, for the purpose of serving the Creator and fulfilling His mitzvos. Thus, just as there is a mitzvah to learn Torah in order to fulfill the mitzvos, so is there a mitzvah of Torah learning through learning about the soul, for it brings a person to serve the Creator and fulfill the mitzvos better.

Additionally, by learning this area of Torah, one gains the illumination of the Torah with regards to recognizing the soul, and through it one can merit to receive the assistance and the tools for self-recognition, so that one can serve the Creator and fulfill the mitzvos, whether the action-dependent mitzvos or the heart-dependent mitzvos or the integration of both of them together.

A Dearth of Sefarim On This Subject

Until now it has been explained, very generally, the reasons why self-recognition is necessary for serving the Creator and fulfilling the mitzvos.

However, the work of learning about the soul and recognizing it is often fraught with difficulty. This is because working with the soul is a subject that is not organized or clear as other areas of Torah. Although working with our soul is no less obligatory than all other mitzvos of Torah, it is a study about the inner world, which is not as easy as learning halachah, for example.

When it comes to knowing how to act in halachah, we have the Gemara, the words of the Rishonim and Acharonim, the latter-day Poskim, and we also have reasons explained for all of the mitzvos, general rules and details about each mitzvah with its many different halachos and

fine nuances. There are many sefarim, which are organized and clear, arranged according to topic, such as the Shulchan Aruch and its commentaries, which explains each halachah. In our times especially there are clearly organized sefarim on every topic of halachah, written for men and women, who can learn these sefarim and know exactly what to do when it comes to fulfilling certain halachos and mitzvos. There is no dearth of halachah sefarim that are clear and organized for all people to learn, making it easier for any person to serve the Creator through knowing how to do the mitzvos correctly.

But there aren't many sefarim for learning about soul-related mitzvos, which require a clearly organized study about the soul. Although there are many statements of our Sages in the Talmud, Midrashim, Rishonim and Acharonim which are describing the inner world, these teachings are scattered, a little bit here and little bit there. The topics about the inner world have not been gathered into one place, and they haven't been explained enough. We do not have a "Shulchan Aruch" with commentaries explaining to us and organizing the topics about the "inner world".

There are a few sefarim that have been released in our generation which explain about matters of the inner world, but even so, there is a great dearth of sefarim that organize this information in an orderly fashion, explaining what the very concept of the inner world is, how to actually go about self-recognition, and how to work with the soul's powers. The availability of sefarim on this topic is sorely lacking, and that makes it difficult for a person to learn about the inner world in general, and about oneself in particular.

And, besides for the aforementioned problem, the lack of sefarim on this topic has also caused many people to form mistaken notions. Here are some of the common misconceptions that people have when it comes to this topic [self-recognition and the need to learn about the soul]. [מהספר הכרה עצמית והעצמת הנפש]

Audio files available on "KOL HALASHON"

Israel 073.295.1245 | USA 718.521.5231 2>4>12

Israeli & Worldwide Deliveries 03.578.2270 | books2770@gmail.com

Sifrei Meah Shearim, 15 Meah Shearim St., Yerushalyim 02.502.2567

Sifrei Abromovitch, 5 Kotler St., Bnei Brak 03.579.3829

Hafatza Sifrei Kodesh 2 Dovid Street, Jerusalem 02.623.0294

Join our active email list: subscribe@bilvavi.net

