



LAG BAOMER & AMALEK

Lag BaOmer is on the 18th day of the month of Iyar. The *gematria* of the word “Iyar,” together with the number 18, is equal to the word “Amalek.” In other words, there is a connection between Amalek and this day.

Whenever a person is sad, this really comes from the fact that he isn't connected to a root. He is like a branch disconnected from its root. The root has a ‘root’ as well to it: the lack of connection between the person and Hashem. By contrast, happiness is when there is connection to our Source.

It is written, “With hardship shall you bear children.” The pain of child labor is called “*etzev*,” which can also mean “sadness.” Birth is a separation of the baby from its mother; when the baby was in its mother, it is considered part of the mother. Now, it has disconnected from its mother – this is the “*etzev*”/sadness of giving birth.

Childbirth, and the *etzev* which follows it, reflects the concept that a person has to be integrated with his Source. The purpose of man is to integrate himself with his root, and keep connecting himself to his roots until he arrives at the root of all roots, the Creator.

On Yom Tov we have a mitzvah to be happy. Yom Tov is “*moed*,” which comes from the word “*vaad*” – a meeting. When there is a meeting, there is connection, and thus there is happiness.

BECHUKOSAI HOW TO USE THIS WORLD

Understanding Physical Abundance

Parshas Bechukosai begins with, “If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them, then I will provide your rains in their time.” When one leads a life of exertion in Torah and doing Hashem's will, there is a guarantee from Hashem that the physical side of life is improved as well. Through the power of the holy Torah, which is rooted in the highest realms, there is *shefa* (heavenly abundance) poured down onto the world, which improves even the most physical needs – the rain specifically, and all physical aspects of life in general.

Let us understand what the blessing of physical *shefa* (heavenly abundance) is.

The Relationship Between Torah Learning and Physical Enjoyment

The *Mishnah* in *Avos* states, “Eat bread dipped in salt and water in a cistern, and sleep on the ground, and live a life of suffering. If you do so, praiseworthy are you in This World, and it will be good for you in the Next World”.¹ If so, why does the Torah state in *Parshas Bechukosai* that physical abundance is a blessing?

There is a dispute in the Gemara whether there is a *halachah* to have physical enjoyment on the festivals, or if they should be purely spiritual enjoyment. The Gemara says that “On *Atzeres* (Shavuot), everyone agrees that it also requires “for you” (physical enjoyment), for it is the day when the Torah was given.² Therefore, *Atzeres*/Shavuot is a day that is half devoted to Hashem [spiritual pursuits], and half devoted for you [physical pleasure]. We learn from this that when there is

the revelation of Torah – represented by the festival of Shavuot, when the Torah was given – it follows with physical enjoyment.

Rashi in the beginning of the *parshah* states that the words “If you will follow My decrees” means, “That you should exert yourselves in Torah”. This leads to the end of the verse, “Then I will provide your rains in their time”, which refers to physical abundance. This needs understanding: What is the connection between exerting ourselves in Torah learning and enjoying physical abundance? Furthermore, what is the proper way to go about physical enjoyment, and what is its connection to learning Torah?

When The Connection To Physicality Becomes Harmful To The Soul

The root of the matter is as follows.

Man is comprised of a *guf* (body) and a *neshamah* (soul). Hashem created man's physical body from the earth, whereas the soul is the “breath of life” that He has breathed in man. When man is involved in the spiritual, he awakens the light of the soul and reveals it from its hidden state. When man is involved with any materialism, his physical body is awakened by the materialism, the body's “companion”, and the gruff physicality of the body increases.

Therefore, when man becomes connected to the material side of life, he becomes more materialistic. He becomes lowered from his spiritual source and descends into a materialistic existence. His soul becomes concealed from him and it will play less of an active role in his life. But even more so, since the ‘companion’ of the physical body is the involvement with materialism, these two ‘companions’ find each other and then the physical

1 Avos 6:4

2 Pesachim 68b

BECHUKOSAI HOW TO USE THIS WORLD

forces become strengthened. The physical body of man then gains much greater control over man.

On the one hand, our involvement with the material side of life is necessary. Hashem, in His wisdom, has created us in a way that we need to be involved with the physical. He created us with a physical body taken from the earth, and that forces us to be involved with the physical and to be connected to it. [This wouldn't damage a person's spiritual state, if he keeps only a minimal connection to the physical, by taking care of his basic physical needs, and he doesn't become overly connected with his materialistic aspect.]

But when man becomes involved with physicality to the point that he overdoes his actual physical needs, or if he has improper intentions when making use of physicality, that is when one's connection to the physical becomes spiritually damaging, increasing the physicality of the body and concealing the soul.

How Much Physicality Do We Need?

It is impossible for man not to be involved in the physical, because Hashem in His wisdom has created us with a physical body that needs to be involved with the physical. If so, we are led to a deep question about the life of man: How much do we need to connect to the physical? What is the proper amount? We can't do without it, and overdoing it is harmful to our soul. So we have a subtle work to do, and it is one of the most difficult tasks we have: How much should we connect to the physical?

Understandably, it is not the same amount with each person. When the manna fell in the desert, everyone received the same amount, whether he was a child or adult, whether he was a bigger or smaller person. The manna was Heavenly food, so it was equal for each person, but with physical food, each person needs a different amount and different kinds of food. Even more so, all physical needs, such as a house, clothing, etc. and all other material aspects of life, are not the same amount for each person.

The *Mesillas Yescharim* states that everything that brings a person closer to Hashem should be greatly pursued, and

anything that distances a person from Hashem should be avoided, as if it is a fire that anyone would run from. That is a general definition which tells us how much we need to make use of our materialistic aspects of this world, but the definition is really more specific than this.

Basic Needs Of The Nefesh HaBehaimis

A person has many parts to the soul. The lowest part of the soul is called the *nefesh habehaimis* ("animal" level of the soul). The higher parts of the soul start from the *nefesh Elohis* ("G-dly" aspect of the soul), then the *Ruach* (a more spiritual force), and then the higher parts of the soul.³

There are the minimal physical needs a person has in order to sustain his body, such as how to eat, drink, etc. How much does one need to eat and drink? This can be determined by asking a nutritionist, but even the nutritionists disagree about what the proper amount is, so even figuring out our basic physical needs is difficult to know. There is some vague outline of how much food and drink one needs, but it is still unclear, and it is subject to a matter of opinion.

However, even if a person knew exactly what his body needs in order for it to be sustained, there are more parts to his existence that he needs to take care of. He has a *nefesh habehaimis*, which also has its needs for well-being.

The *nefesh habehaimis* has different needs to the body, and it demands much more than the body does. From a simple perspective, we can view it as entirely evil, and of this we can subtly apply the statement of Chazal, "Eat bread dipped in salt and water in a cistern, sleep on the ground, and live a life of suffering." However, the truer perspective is that the *nefesh habehaimis* has more needs than the body does, in order for it to be sustained and healthy. These are normal, healthy needs of the *nefesh habehaimis* - which we should make sure is received.

3 Editor's Note: Above the ""Ruach" level of the soul is the "Neshamah" level, and above that, the Chayah, and above that, the Yechidah. The Rav explains these five parts of the soul in further detail, in the hebrew sefer *את נשמתך* דע.

The *Mesillas Yescharim* asks the question of how much we should avoid physicality and how much we should make use of it, and he answers that it depends on how much a person needs for his *yishuv hadaas* (peace of mind). But besides for the needs of the physical body itself, there are also the needs of the *nefesh habehaimis* which need to be considered.

It is tough to know how much one needs for his *yishuv hadaas*, and it is a subtle determination; but even more so, it is more difficult to know how much we need to give our *nefesh habehaimis* - and how much we should not give in to it. For example, Chazal state that "a beautiful wife, beautiful utensils, and a beautiful home" are all things that expand the mind.⁴ But how much should a person actually go about making use of these things? It is a very subtle matter.

Staying Centered

On the one hand, a person's *avodah* is to strive for self-perfection and growth, to keep growing, on the ladder that ascends to G-d. As a person grows spiritually, his connection to materialism is weakened, for his G-dly soul is awakened, and in turn, the hold of his animal soul upon him becomes less dominant.

The more connected a person becomes to Hashem, to Torah learning, to his davening, to doing *chessed*, and to doing the *mitzvos* and to truly doing Hashem's will, the more inner and truthful he becomes, and his connection to the material world weakens.

But at the same time, a person must know his current level. Along with aspiring for spiritual growth, one must also accept that he isn't perfect yet and that he currently has some material needs.

So while one must always aspire for more spiritual growth, he must also know the current level where his "animal soul" rests. If one lacks this awareness, there will be detrimental results. He will detach from materialism when he is not really ready for this level, and often, it is way above his current level to do so. ...

[BILVAVI ON THE PARSHAH]

4 Berachos 57b

SELF-RECOGNITION & SELF-ACTUALIZATION

In the last couple of years, the cellphone is getting even “smarter”. It has become so “smart” that it resembles the verse, “Let us be smarter than them.”¹ The smartphone is able to do all the thinking, seeing, hearing, speak, and feeling, for a person. It can listen to commands and do work instead of people, and it does it all immediately and easily. Any progress or advancement in technology is mainly for one purpose – so that people can get more easily what they want.² There is even a technology being developed that can cook and make food, so that a person won’t have to touch a pot. Technology is always being advanced so that people can do things quickly and easily and without having to work hard at anything. While there are recognizable gains and benefits from all of this technology, and there are also those who find it too difficult to manage without them, there are also many areas where we can manage without them, with just minimal effort.

If a person is simply open to receiving whatever the generation is presenting and inventing, a person gets used to living without working hard and without having patience to get what he wants, and then he won’t want to work hard at building the proper lifestyle. That will mean that the person isn’t using his mind as needed, his emotional development will be hampered, his social interactions will dwindle, and he won’t have the patience to work on himself and he will be impacted physically as well. Such a person is not progressing in a healthy way, but the opposite. As time goes on, it will become more difficult for people to deal with life, and emotional issues will increase. All of the quick and easy comforts of life that are available in this generation are all in exchange for the ability to deal properly with life and to have the patience to deal with challenges – a heavy price to pay that’s not worth it.

As an awful result of this, whenever a person wants to solve his issues, he will naturally want the solution that’s quickest and easiest. He has gotten used to the perspective of everything coming quickly and easily to him, and the easier or quicker the therapy takes, the better it seems. If a therapist or another person can do all the work for him and he doesn’t have to do effort, even better (there are such views in therapy today). This perspective that a person grows up

with and breathes with is problematic, and it causes people to have emotional and physical issues. It hampers people from the ability to deal with challenges, because they depend on having fast and easy solutions to everything. It prevents people from searching for solutions to their problems, and even more so, it prevents people from self-recognition and building a proper lifestyle for themselves.

Fast, Easy Therapy Vs. Long-Term Programs Of Growing

The “wonder” methods of therapy today³ that provide quick and easy solutions for issues are catering to the generation that grows up with there has to be quick and easy solutions for everything. It is no “wonder” then that many times, these methods do not bring about the desired purpose. There are methods of therapy today which encourage a person to imagine that he is something he isn’t. Other methods will magnify all of a person’s weaknesses and bring out the worst in a person, and other methods will build up one power in the person while destroying all the other abilities of the person. Not only aren’t the issues solved, but they even get worse.⁴ No wonder that so many people today are saying, “I tried everything – I’ve been through almost every kind of therapy – but nothing helped me.”⁵

Therefore, when a person is looking for solutions to the issues in his soul, he must turn to the ways of therapy that are based on the pillars of the holy Torah and the words of our Sages and teachers of blessed memory.⁶ The Torah ways of dealing with issues do not guarantee any “miracles and wonders” and they don’t claim to be quick and easy. But they are solutions which are true and aligned with the soul, and they bring fundamental changes, for the better.

In essence, the “short” ways of getting help today end up being “long”, because they seem to bear quick results, but eventually the problems of such approaches are exposed and they don’t allow a person to reach his desired goal. In contrast to this, the Torah’s way of dealing with issues is “long” but it ends up being “short”, because although the results can’t be seen immediately, it doesn’t take much time to realize that the Torah’s way is the proper path to

1 Shemos 1:10. These words were said by the Egyptian advisors to Pharaoh when they were trying to get rid of the Jewish people....

2 The smartphone has made everything so quick and easy to the point that a person relies on it, in all of his areas. One is attached to this device with his sense of sight, hearing, speech, and touch, as if he has nothing else in his world other than his own 4 inches (or more) of his smartphone. If that wasn’t enough, the developers of these devices are working day and night to make this device offer tastes and scents, and when that happens, people who use them will become entirely attached to these devices, with all of their senses. One of the smartphone developers said, “I have reached my goal – producing a machine that can’t think which turns thinking people into machines that can’t think.” His friends added on that this machine also makes people unfeeling, and it has turned feeling people into people who can’t feel....

3 (Even the experts in these fields of “wonder” therapy have become experts in it in such a short amount of time – a true “wonder”! In order to become a qualified therapist that uses these “wonder” methods of therapy, it takes a few months to get a degree for it, and already they are “experts” at it.

4 Through extensive research that was done by those in this field, it became known that a large amount of cases that used these methods of therapy were only short-lived gains for those who tried it (if there were any benefit at all). After a few months, or about a year later, the issues returned, and in some cases the issues came back worse.

5 Even in cases where such methods are permitted and even helpful, it can only help in certain cases, and there are detrimental effects even where it is helpful.

SELF-RECOGNITION & SELF-ACTUALIZATION

take, since its results are forthcoming and they bring a person to his desired goal. It is better to take a “longer” approach that takes time and effort, but which ends up being “short” because it bears the desired results - than to take what seems like a “short” approach which won’t take up much of our time and effort, but which is eventually exposed as an approach that takes a long amount of time to be effective.

The Way To View Our Personal Shortcomings

There is yet another reason that motivates people to engage in self-recognition solely for the purpose of solving their issues. Many people will tend to look at themselves as being a collection of many different bad characteristics – their *yetzer hora* (evil inclination), or the evil forces within them. They want to fight with the evil within them, and therefore they learn about how the *yetzer hora* works and what the ways of fighting it are. While this is a true perspective, it is only the external way to view our inner world and how we work with our souls. If one is looking to expose the bad in himself in order to fight with it, and he views his soul as a field to fight wars in, then he has a superficial perspective about his inner world. The inner way to view the soul, our internal world, is very different. It is as follows.

The soul is a wondrous creation. It is a “*portion of G-d from above*”,⁷ and many good abilities are contained in it. Every ability in our soul is a gift from Hashem, which is meant to be used for the purpose that Hashem created it for. But Hashem willed that some of the soul’s abilities aren’t revealed, or they aren’t repaired or balanced enough, even though in essence they are good, special abilities. It is upon a person to always be in a learning process about his soul and working with his abilities, to recognize his strengths and become connected with them and utilize his potential, and to get vitality and joy as a result, from using his abilities properly. One also has to reveal, repair, and balance, any of the abilities of the soul that haven’t yet been revealed, repaired, or balanced.

But this should not be done with a perspective of a war against the evil within oneself. Rather, it must be done with a positive perspective, from the understanding that every part of ourselves, every ability of our soul, is a gift from Hashem and a part of us. After we have revealed, balanced, and repaired the abilities we aren’t making use of, we need to become connected with them and utilize them properly, and we will get vitality and joy from these abilities no

less than how we can get vitality and joy from our strong and good abilities. This is the inner perspective to have on all self-recognition and self-actualization, and to the extent that we view our soul and its abilities in an inner, positive way like this, our ability to recognize our soul and work with our abilities will be refined, and we will be much closer to repairing our souls and reaching self-perfection on this world.

When we view self-recognition and working with our soul with a superficial perspective, a fight against the evil that’s found in us, this awakens the ability in ourselves to be at war and to engage in a fight. With such a perspective, a person will be looking for trouble in himself – so that he can have what to fight. He might succeed, and he might not. But in either case, his perspective is that he is at war with himself. In contrast, a person can view his inner work with a more inner perspective than the above. He can desire a peaceful state for his soul to be in. He wants to be at peace with himself. He can approach self-recognition and fixing himself as a yearning to understand himself, all of his parts, and to work with them from a perspective of peace, from a calm place in himself, and from a desire of wanting to reach self-completion.

Compare this to a father who wants to know his children and also help them. He wants to know what his child’s faults are, and the bad *middos* and struggles of his child. But this is only so that he can help his child. Would any father want to know what his child’s negative aspects are, simply for the sake of exposing the bad parts in his child? Of course not. The entire wish of the father is to know the good traits, talents, and successes, of his child, and he also wants to see what needs to be fixed. The father needs the full picture, the good parts and the bad parts, so that he can recognize his child better and be able to help him, and from a positive perspective. Even when helping the child fix his faults and deal with his struggles, it is all for the purpose of helping the reach more perfection.

The lesson from this analogy is that when a person approaches inner work and self-recognition, it is better to do this with a desire to be at peace with himself and achieve internal harmony and self-completion, rather than from a perspective of fighting himself and being in a war with himself. There is a big difference between these two perspectives.

[מהספר הכרה עצמית והעצמת הנפש]

7 Iyov 31:2



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



TO SPONSOR: USA 917.589.3379 / 732.966.7743 · ISRAEL 050.415.3996 · info@bilvavi.net