

LISTEN TO BILVAVI ON KOL HALASHON ISRAEL 073.295.1245 USA 718.521.5231 (2>4>12)

YEARNING FOR HASHEM

Chazal state that as long as Amalek exists in our world, the Name of Hashem and the Throne of Hashem is incomplete, and it will not be complete until Amalek is totally erased from the world. Thus, when we ask Hashem in *Shemoneh Esrei* that His Name become exalted forever, we are really asking that all evil become erased, so that His Name can be revealed.

Let us think a little into this, so that this prayer should not be uttered from our mouths superficially, and that is should rather be in line with what we know in our hearts.

BECOMING MORE SPIRITUAL: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Man was created from earth, and he has a *neshamah* breathed into him from Hashem. When a person starts out life, it is his body which is dominant. His desires and thoughts and energies are mostly channeled towards the physical. It's very possible that he will end life that way too, if he never seeks to awaken his *ruchniyus* (his spiritual side). But when a person exerts himself in Torah study, and he keeps the *mitzvos*, and along with this he works to purify his *middos* and he separates himself from materialism - slowly but surely, his spiritual side will begin to emerge.

Our *ruchniyus* - our 'spirituality' - essentially means that we are a *neshamah*, the spirit of life that was breathed into us from Hashem. The more a person grows and is purified, he naturally begins to seek more *ruchniyus*, and not simply because he feels that he is 'commanded' by Hashem to learn Torah and do the *mitzvos*. Not only does he recognize intellectually that there is a G-d and that there is reward and punishment; he develops a natural sense for the spiritual.

The intellect (*seichel*) is referred to as "the spirituality of the body", but it's still within the "body", so intellectual

pursuit of spirituality is not yet real spirituality. It is only when a person *naturally* seeks spirituality that spirituality becomes real to him. It is when the soul's nature is becoming revealed to the person.

Just as the body naturally seeks materialism, for it comes from earth and it is drawn towards the earthy materialism of this world that it comes from, so does the soul seek its source, which is the spiritual. When a person purifies himself from materialism - through learning Torah and doing the *mitzvos* and working on his *middos*, along with active effort to separate from the materialism of this world - the light of the *neshamah* begins to become revealed. He exits the physical dimension of this world and enters another dimension: the spiritual.

LIVING SUPERFICIALLY

But we must understand that even if a person grew up in a Torah home, where he learned Torah and did all the *mitzvos*, it is not always definite that he will become spiritual and become purified and reveal the nature of the soul. It's very possible that although he learned Torah and kept all the *mitzvos*, it was only because he intellectually recognized that he must do all these things, or because he simply grew up that way and he's used to it, or because he sometimes felt inspired.

This doesn't free a person from the nature of the physical body and let him be able to enter the nature of the soul.

It is therefore possible that for his entire life, he learned Torah and even exerted himself in its study, but he never pursued it *naturally*. If he is not pursuing it naturally, it means that he has never really accessed his *ruchniyus*.

When a person merits to purify himself from materialism and he reveals his spiritual side, he *naturally*

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seeks spirituality, no less than how the body naturally seeks the physical.

Leaving the body's nature, and entering our soul's nature, is essentially a redemption to our souls, where we leave the 'prison' of the body. It enables us to live a higher form of life.

WHY DO WE SEARCH?

However, we must know that while seeking spirituality is a "redemption to the soul", it can also be a form of exile to the soul! This is because it depends on why we are searching to become more spiritual.

There are two reasons why a person would want to become more spiritual.

One motivation is a desire to live a spiritual kind of life; just as the angels live in Heaven and they live an entirely spiritual life, so does our *neshamah*, which is called "daughter of Heaven", seek to live a spiritual life. Our *neshamah* wants to live an angelic kind of life, where there are no animalistic desires or human weaknesses that come from the elements of our lower soul. It wants Torah, mitzvos, holiness, spirituality, good *middos*, and all the qualities it can attain.

But there is a deeper search of the soul than this: instead of simply seeking to become spiritual and leave the physical, there is a deep desire of the soul to seek Hashem Himself. "*Your face, I seek.*" The depth of the Jew's soul seeks to become attached to Hashem. This is much deeper than simply seeking to live a spiritual life. It is to search for Hashem Himself, for His very *havayah* (reality).

(There are people who overdo this and they search for attachment with the Creator alone, but they do not want Torah or mitzvos, *chas v'shalom*. This is a terrible mistake. But in general, the search to for attachment with the Creator is the holy and deep desire of the soul.)

One must be clear that he has two kinds of searches in life. One kind of search is to live a more spiritual kind of life, and a deeper kind of search is to search for Hashem Himself.

When one is not clear about his spiritual side of life,

when he does not live in a "clear world", **he** will mix up the two kinds of searches, mistaking them for being the same. He will think that living a spiritual kind of life alone is already an attachment to Hashem - which is not always the case. He might go his whole life searching to become more spiritual and to keep elevating himself, but he is not really searching for *Hashem*.

"IT IS OUR DESIRE TO SEE OUR KING"

This kind of person is missing the desire of "*Ritzoneinu Liros Es Malkeinu*", "It is our desire to see our King" - which the Jewish people uttered at Har Sinai.

The receiving of the Torah, originally, was supposed to be given in the form of Torah alone. But the Jewish people requested to see Hashem there. They knew that Torah and all spiritual revelation is not yet the deepest level. They knew that the greatest recognition is to see Hashem, to recognize the *havayah* of Hashem descending onto Har Sinai. Therefore, they requested, "It is our desire to see our King."

"Hashem, the Torah and Yisrael are one." The root of all spirituality is Torah, and the root of Torah is Hashem. A person can connect to Hashem through the spirituality of Torah, where he can enjoy both revelation of Torah and connection to Hashem. This was the perfect level we reached at Har Sinai.

But after the people sinned with the Golden Calf, that great connection with Hashem through the Torah became obscured. Now Hashem's Presence is hidden and concealed from us. He is definitely there, but He placed limits on how much He reveals himself. Therefore, it's possible that a person exerts himself in Torah, but he doesn't recognize Hashem through it.

It is written, "*Those who grasp Torah do not know me.*" This is referring to a person who does not have the desire to see the King, and he simply seeks spirituality - without Hashem in the picture.

One must first reflect about this concept and internalize it in the heart: the search for spirituality, and the desire to see the King, are not the same thing.

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THE PURPOSE OF CREATION

If a person is not aware that there is a difference, he will think that simply learning Torah and doing all the *mitzvos* will, by default, bring a person closer to the purpose, to attachment with the Creator. He will definitely be able to become more spiritual and perhaps he will become somewhat deeper and more purified, but that doesn't mean he will develop a yearning for Hashem, a desire to see the King.

Such a person will think that the purpose of Creation is that Hashem's Torah be revealed. Although this is true, it is not the total truth. There is more to life and its purpose: we must remember that *Hashem* was revealed through the Torah, for that was the perfected level of Torah that we had when we received the Torah at Har Sinai.

PREPARING FOR SHAVUOS: NOT JUST ABOUT THE TORAH

When we prepare for the time of the giving of the Torah, during the 49 days of Sefiras HaOmer, we must know clearly where we are heading towards. The point is not to reach deep spiritual revelations and high levels of purity and holiness. The point of purifying ourselves during this time is so that we can merit a greater goal: to prepare ourselves for the King.

Every year, when Shavuos returns, the light of the giving of the Torah returns with it, so it is not just the 'time' when the Torah was given. The entire event of Sinai returns! That means that "Our desire to see our King" returns each year on Shavuos. But we have to be aware of this and prepare for it.

If a person isn't aware of this, then he thinks that

preparing for the giving of the Torah means to prepare for the "Torah" alone. But the true way to prepare is to realize that there is not only a giving of the Torah that is coming – there is a Giver behind it. Shavuos is called Zman Matan Torah (the time of the giving of the Torah) as opposed to Zman Kaballas Torah (the time of receiving the Torah), so that we can remember the One who gave it to us.

WHY DO WE AWAIT THE TIMES OF MASHIACH?

When a person only prepares for Torah - but not for Hashem – then he has a hard time understanding why he should want the Name of Hashem to be revealed, as we ask in *Shemoneh Esrei*. He will wish for more Torah in the world, more purity and holiness in the world – all of these are good things – but he is missing the main yearning.

If a person doesn't deeply desire "to see the King", he merely awaits a more purified kind of world, he awaits the resurrection of the dead and the coming of Mashiach, and he thinks that the goal of Creation ends there....

Although the times of Mashiach will be times where we are free to learn the wisdom of Torah all day, this is not all there is to it. 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 long for.

Thus, yearning for more Torah, without a yearning for Hashem, is missing the point. Such a person is missing the main yearning to have on this world. He might spend his life learning Torah and doing all the mitzvos, but he is not searching for Hashem in all of it. He yearns

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for more and more revelation of Torah, but he is blank from yearnings for Hashem!

TWO DIFFERENT YEARNINGS TO HAVE

So we must know that these are two very different yearnings.

The truth is that at the root of everything, everything is rooted in Hashem, so Torah and Hashem are ultimately intertwined. “Hashem and the Torah are one.” But this is not always revealed in a person’s life, so he does not always see Torah as being “one” with Hashem.

When we separate from materialism and we yearn for spirituality and for more Torah, this is but half of our *avodah*. Of course, we must certainly yearn for more spiritual levels and for more Torah, as we explained before; but it is not yet everything. The greater part of our *avodah* on this world is to yearn for the revelation of Hashem on the world.

We can keep moving back and forth between these two yearnings (revelation of Torah, and revelation of Hashem), which, on a deeper level, is really an integration of our yearning for Torah with our yearning for Hashem.

THE DESIRE FOR HASHEM’S NAME

This deep place in the soul is described by the Rambam as “the desire for Hashem’s Name”. 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 soul’s yearning for Him.

The “Pain of the Shechinah”

The more a person lives his life in this way, the more he yearns for the revelation of Hashem’s Name on this world, and then he can feel great pain at the tremendous *chilul Hashem* (desecration of His Name) in our times: the void of feeling Hashem’s Presence on this world.

It is also called the “pain of the *Shechinah*.” The *Shechinah* has pain over the fact that people are not keeping Torah and mitzvos and don’t know of Hashem. But there is also pain of the *Shechinah* over people who know of spirituality, yet they don’t have a desire to see the King. The *Shechinah* is described by our Sages as the revelation of Hashem on this world. There is His reality, and there is His revelation. When He is revealed on this world, this is called *Shechinah*. The pain of the *Shechinah* is the fact that His presence is hidden and not revealed in the world.

But when we have a “desire to see our King”, then the words we daven in Shemoneh Esrei of וְעַל כּוֹלָם יִתְבָּרַךְ, where we *daven* that Hashem’s Name be revealed, it is a prayer emanating from our soul. We are not only asking that Hashem be revealed to *Klal Yisrael*, but that He be revealed in the entire world.

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. Then we can really mean it when we say the words, וְעַל כּוֹלָם יִתְבָּרַךְ יִתְרוֹמֵם וִיתְנַשֵּׂא שְׁמֶךָ תָּמִיד לְעוֹלָם, ועד.

IN CONCLUSION

The concept here is far from the comprehension of most people in the world now, who are entrenched in materialism, and even those who seek spirituality are not in always in touch with the desire to see Hashem. There are only a few people who truly yearn to find Hashem Himself.

May we merit to desire as we go along in our *avodah* throughout life, especially as we prepare for the time of receiving the Torah. And when the time of the giving of the Torah comes – as well as before it – we can merit, all of *Klal Yisrael*, as well as the entire world, the recognition of Hashem, alone.¹

¹ See also Tefillah #0121 – Yearning For Revelation of Shechinah and Torah