

D'VEYKUS TO HASHEM BY STUDYING TORAH**'LISHMAH' IS NOT 'D'VEYKUS'**

The *Nefesh HaChaim* (Gate IV: Chapter 2) writes that the clear and true meaning of learning Torah “*lishmah*” does not mean *d'veykus* (attachment to Hashem), unlike how most of the world thinks. From this point onward until Chapter 10, the *Nefesh HaChaim* explains what it means to learn Torah “*lishmah*”. Here the *Nefesh HaChaim* begins the discussion, by saying that “*lishmah* does not mean *d'veykus*.”

This seems to contradict *Nefesh HaChaim*'s words in Chapter 6, which concerns the preparation that must come before one begins to learn Torah, in which the *Nefesh HaChaim* writes: “One must intend in his Torah learning to connect himself to the Torah, to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* (the Blessed One).”

But there is a subtle observation we can learn from his words, and this answers the contradiction: There are two types of *d'veykus*. There is *d'veykus* that one can have in the Torah itself, and there is *d'veykus* one can have in Hashem.

So when the *Nefesh HaChaim* says that that *lishmah* does not mean *d'veykus*, the way to understand this is, that learning Torah *lishmah* does not mean to have ***d'veykus* in Hashem**. However, if so, what does the *Nefesh HaChaim* mean later on, where he says that before learning Torah, one should intend to connect himself to Torah and to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*? The understanding of this will be explained here as we go along.

THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF D'VEYKUS

The first thing we need understand is that there are several facets to what it means to have *d'veykus* in Hashem.

1-2) *D'veykus* Through Ahavah (Love of Hashem) or through Yirah (Fear of Hashem). There is *d'veykus* in Hashem through feelings of either ***ahavah*** (love) or ***yirah*** (awe) of Him. If a person loves the Creator, he is connected in *d'veykus* with Him through *ahavah*, and if a person fears Hashem, this is a *d'veykus* to Hashem in the form of *yirah*. (With *yirah* it is harder to understand, because the very idea of *yirah* seems to

contradict the entire idea of *d'veykus*, which implies a loving feeling of connection towards Hashem. But our Sages have explained, at length, of how *yirah* is a necessary step in the process of *d'veykus*.)

3) *D'veykus* Through Hishtokekus (Yearning For Hashem). Another form of *d'veykus* to Hashem is through *hishtokekus* (yearning) for Hashem; when a person has a longing and a hope to be close to Hashem.

4) *D'veykus* Through Hakarah (Recognition). Another form of *d'veykus* to Hashem is when a person feels and recognizes the truth of the reality of Hashem; when he knows of His “*atzmus*” (intrinsic reality), so to speak. When one has a recognition, in his soul, of the intrinsic reality of Hashem, this is a form of attachment to Him.

There are also several other forms of *d'veykus*. There is: **(5) *D'veykus* in Hashem's *ratzon*** (will); and **(6) *D'veykus* in His *chochmah*** (wisdom); and **(7) *D'veykus* in His *dibbur*** (word).

D'VEYKUS IN TORAH: ATTACHMENT TO HASHEM'S WILL, WISDOM, & WORD

Later in Chapter 6, the *Nefesh HaChaim* is speaking of these three particular kinds of *d'veykus*. These are all forms of *d'veykus* in Hashem through the direct means of learning Torah.

When one learns *Halacha* (in Gemara), this is *d'veykus* in Hashem's ***ratzon*** specifically. “Hashem does not have anything in His world except for the four cubits of *Halacha*.” This is because it is specifically *Halacha* which reveals Hashem's will. When one learns *Halacha*, he is connecting himself to what Hashem wants. Hashem's will can either be that a certain case is liable, exempt, pure, impure, forbidden, permitted, etc. This area of Torah learning, *Halacha*, is a *d'veykus* to Hashem in the form of being connected with His *ratzon*.

Later, the *Nefesh HaChaim* will bring a statement, “He and His *ratzon* (will) are one.” Thus, there is a way to connect oneself to Hashem – that is, to His *ratzon*\will – through learning the Torah.

D'VEYKUS TO HASHEM BY STUDYING TORAH

Another kind of *d'veykus* to Hashem through learning Torah is when one learns *Agadta* (homiletic sections of the Gemara). The *Nefesh HaChaim* will later state that although matters of *Agadta* do not directly deal with imparting Hashem's will (although it is certainly explaining Hashem's will, it is not as obvious as with learning *Halacha*), a person learning words of *Agadta* is still involving himself with the *dibbur* (word) of Hashem. This is because all of Torah is the "*dvar Hashem*", the "word of Hashem."

Others use different terminology: learning *Agadta* is a connection to the *chochmah* (wisdom) of Hashem. This is supported by the statement brought later, "He and His will are one, He and His wisdom are one."

THE DEFINITION OF 'D'VEYKUS' WHILE LEARNING TORAH

These last three kinds of *d'veykus* mentioned (*d'veykus* in His *ratzon*\will, *d'veykus* in His *dibbur*\word, and *d'veykus* in His *chochmah*\wisdom) are the kinds of *d'veykus* that the *Nefesh HaChaim* is talking about when he says that a person learning Torah is having *d'veykus* to Hashem. When a person is learning Torah, he is involving himself with either the *ratzon*, *dibbur*, or *chochmah* of Hashem, depending on which area of Torah he is learning.

The *Nefesh HaChaim* is also saying here that when a person learns Torah, besides for the fact that he is attached to the Torah, he is also attached with Hashem. He is attached to the Torah (either to Hashem's will, word, or wisdom), and at the same time, He is also connected to Hashem, whether it is a connection to Him through studying His will, through studying His word, or through studying His wisdom.

This leads the *Nefesh HaChaim* to address the following issue, before addressing any other questions: When a person is learning Torah, does he need to feel connected to Hashem through *ahavah* (love), *yirah* (awe), *hishtokekus* (yearning), and *hakarah* (recognizing His reality)? The *Nefesh HaChaim* deals with this issue in Chapters 2-3.

But there is also another issue: When a person is learning Torah, must he also be aware that he is connecting himself to Hashem's *ratzon*, *dibbur*, and *chochmah*? The *Nefesh HaChaim* goes at length (in Chapters 6-7, and in Chapter 14) to prove that this is definitely a necessary intention, and that it is in fact that ideal way to learn Torah. This is the first issue that the *Nefesh HaChaim* will now deal with.

A second issue that the *Nefesh HaChaim* will deal with is: When a person is learning, must he specifically think that

"Hashem and the Torah are one"? Must a person concentrate on connecting to Hashem as he is learning Torah? The *Nefesh HaChaim* will later explain (at the end of this chapter, and in Chapter 10) that if a person thinks of this as he is trying to learn Torah, he will never be able to concentrate on the Gemara properly.

IN SUMMARY

So we need to understand that there are two issues with regards to learning Torah and *d'veykus*. First of all, there are different kinds of *d'veykus*, as laid out before:

1] D'veykus in Hashem – through the means of either

- *ahavah* (love of Hashem);
- *yirah* (awe of Hashem);
- *hishtokekus* (yearnings for Hashem);
- *hakarah* (recognition of the reality and existence of Hashem)

2] D'veykus in Torah – by having d'veykus in

- His *ratzon*\will [through learning Halacha-oriented Gemara];
- His *dibbur*\word [through learning Agadta-type Gemara];
- His *chochmah*/wisdom (through learning Agadta-type Gemara).

The first kinds of *d'veykus* (*ahavah*, *yirah*, *hishtokekus*, and *hakarah*) are not openly revealed during the time that a person is actually learning Torah.

There is no necessity to have thoughts of love or fear of Hashem as one is learning Torah. Although everything is ultimately the light of Torah, for "Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world", still, this kind connection to Hashem is not openly revealed in learning Torah. As for *d'veykus* in Hashem through *hishtokekus* (yearnings for Hashem), this is not either an idea revealed through learning Torah. The same goes for the kind of *d'veykus* in Hashem through *hakarah* (recognizing His reality). Although the Torah reveals Hashem's reality, this particular point is not the idea that is revealed through learning Torah.

But the other kinds of *d'veykus* listed above – *d'veykus* in His *ratzon*, *d'veykus* in His *chochmah*, and *d'veykus* in His *dibbur* – these are all ways to have *d'veykus* in Hashem as we learn Torah. They are all forms of *levush* (garment) of Hashem.

Thus, the *Nefesh HaChaim* writes that as a person is learning Torah, he does not need to think that He is loving Hashem,

fearing Hashem, yearning for Hashem, or remembering that He exists. [Of course, when a person is not learning Torah, it is *then* that he is obligated to have either thoughts of love, or awe, or yearnings, or recognition, of Hashem).

The *Nefesh HaChaim* then addresses a second issue. When a person is learning Gemara, he is attaching himself to the *ratzon* of Hashem, or to the *chochmah* of Hashem, or to the *dibbur* of Hashem. Before a person opens up his Gemara, he needs to be aware that he will be learning Torah in order to be connected to Hashem's *ratzon*, or *chochmah*, or *dibbur*. But during the actual time that a person is learning Torah, what must he be thinking? He must be able to concentrate on his learning.

To say it clearer, before a person is about to learn Torah, he needs to be aware that he will be connecting himself to Hashem through the Torah. But during the time that a person is actually learning, he does not need to think about having *d'veykus* in Hashem, nor should he be thinking about *d'veykus* in Torah; he should just think about what he is doing – which is, to concentrate on what he is learning.

These are the two issues we need to be aware of: The different kinds of *d'veykus*, as well as what a person has to be thinking of while he is learning Torah.

So far, we have been giving definitions, of *d'veykus*. At this point, it is all just knowledge, and it is upon us to internalize these definitions. Therefore, what we have learned until now will not be enough.

Let us reflect on the following. It has been explained here that before a person opens the Gemara, he should think that he will be attaching himself now to either the *ratzon* of Hashem, or to the *chochmah* of Hashem, or to the *dibbur* of Hashem. However, will such thoughts alone connect a person to Hashem?! Compare this to a person who says he is about to eat, and then he doesn't eat.

When one is not connected to Hashem's will or to His wisdom, learning Torah will not connect him to Hashem's will or wisdom. Of course, learning Torah will definitely do something for the person; there is always some degree of spiritual light that a person receives when he learns Torah. But if one is not anyways connected to Hashem's will or to His wisdom, he is very far from being connected to it.

Until now we have given intellectual definitions of what *d'veykus* is, but now that we "know" what it is, we need to internalize it upon our hearts.

Since learning Torah is to attach ourselves to Hashem's will (*d'veykus* in His *ratzon*), one must be on the level in which Hashem's will is being revealed through him. When one is already connected to Hashem's will, then learning Torah will lift him higher in that sense. It will then be a kind of Torah learning in which he is connected to Hashem's will, and he is also connected to the Torah at the same time; he is connected to Hashem, as a result of being connected to His will, as he studies the Torah.

The same goes for connecting to Hashem's *chochmah*. One must reveal a connection to the concept of *chochmah*, and then his Torah learning will connect him to Hashem's *chochmah*, at the very same time that he is connected to the Torah. And the same goes for connecting to the *dibbur* of Hashem. When one reveals a connection to the concept of *dibbur* of Hashem, then speaking words of Torah will further connect him to the word of Hashem!

But we must know the following. We can know all of these definitions, yet it still will not suffice. In fact, a person might even be an expert in the entire *Nefesh HaChaim shaar daled* (Gate IV), from beginning until end, and he might even be capable of writing an in-depth sefer on all the concepts here. He might even be able to define what the meaning of "*lishmah*" is. But that doesn't mean he has reached "*lishmah*", at all! It won't even help to "have in mind" before opening up the Gemara that one is about to learn Torah in order to have *d'veykus* in His Torah, in His *chochmah*, in His *ratzon*, or in His *dibbur*. It will surely help a little if he does this, because in the end of the day, one's thoughts can certainly uplift him a bit. But it still won't mean that he is *there*.

Thus, all that we have discussed until now, and all that will be discussed later, with the help of Hashem – we must first understand the details being explained here and what they consist of, and then, we need to reveal them within our own souls. Only after you reveal the matter from within your own soul can you work to understand these matters with your mind and then internalize them in your heart.

It has been explained here, with *siyata d'shamaya*, in the words of the *Nefesh HaChaim*, the "clear truth" of what it means to learn Torah *lishmah*. (As is well-known, the *Nefesh HaChaim* is mainly coming to disagree with the opinion of *sefer Yoisher Divrei Emes*, who has a completely opposite opinion about this matter¹). It has been explained that the

1 See Tefillah #050 – How Learning Gemara Brings You Closer To Hashem

Nefesh HaChaim is of the opinion that “*lishmah* does not mean *d'veykus*”.

What kind of ‘*d'veykus*’ is *Nefesh HaChaim* referring to, of which ‘*lishmah*’ does not mean? The *Nefesh HaChaim* is referring to thoughts of *d'veykus* in Hashem [through either *ahavah*, *yirah*, *hishtokekus*, and *hakarah*]. He is not referring to *d'veykus* in Hashem’s *ratzon*, *chochmah*, or *dibbur*. This is because *lishmah* definitely means to be attached to the Torah; it means to be attached to Hashem through studying His *ratzon*, through studying His *chochmah*, or through studying His *dibbur*. This will be explained in Chapters 6-7.

The *Nefesh HaChaim* writes that *lishmah* does not mean *d'veykus*, [unlike] how most of the world thinks”. What, indeed, did most of the world think? The *Nefesh HaChaim* continues: “For the Sages state, in the *Midrash*, that Dovid HaMelech requested of Hashem, that when one involves himself with *Tehillim*, it should be considered by Hashem as if one is involving himself with the study of the laws of *Negaim* and *Ohalos*”.

When a person says *Tehillim*, what kind of *d'veykus* does he have in Hashem? Most people will feel either love for Hashem, or awe of Hashem, or yearnings for Hashem. (In rare circumstances, a person might reveal a feeling of recognizing the reality of Hashem.) These are the different kinds of *d'veykus* that people reach when they say *Tehillim*.

Now we can understand why many people left the study of Torah, in favor of learning *mussar* and saying *Tehillim*. It was because they were searching for *d'veykus* in Hashem through either *ahavah*, or through *yirah*, or through *hishtokekus* (only a few people were searching for a *hakarah* of Hashem, though). Our *mussar sefarim* are filled with explanations of these matters, and this was the kind of *d'veykus* that many people were searching for: *ahavah*, *yirah*, and *hishtokekus*.

That was why learning *mussar* or saying *Tehillim* looked so much more appealing to them than in-depth study of Torah. It was because they thought that this is what it means to learn Torah *lishmah*. They weren’t feeling any love or fear of Hashem as they learned the words of Abaye and Rava; they weren’t filled with yearnings for Hashem as they learned the words of Gemara.

Thus, they thought that they are not reaching *lishmah*. If

so, they reasoned that it’s worthwhile to abandon the study of Torah, and instead learn *mussar sefarim*, which explain how a person can attain *ahavah*, *yirah*, and *hishtokekus*.

What was their mistake? They didn’t realize that there are different facets to having *d'veykus* in Hashem. They were unaware that *d'veykus* in Hashem through learning Torah does not mean to attach oneself to Hashem through thoughts of love, fear, or yearning, and that it is rather a connection to Hashem’s will, wisdom, and word.

They must have come to this mistake because when most people learn Torah, they do not openly reveal a *d'veykus* in their Torah learning to Hashem’s will, wisdom, or word. That was why it seemed to them that learning Torah doesn’t bring about *d'veykus*.

One who is truthful is aware that although it is necessary to develop feelings of love for Hashem, awe of Hashem, yearnings for Hashem, and recognition of Hashem, it is also necessary to spend our main pursuit of the day in the study of Torah. And with what kind of *d'veykus*? Torah learning is *d'veykus* in Hashem’s *ratzon* (will), *d'veykus* in His *chochmah* (wisdom), and *d'veykus* in His *dibbur* (word). Those areas are where most of our *d'veykus* should be spent in!!

IN CONCLUSION

These matters first need to be understood at least on the intellectual level. When we are aware, at least intellectually, of these abilities of our soul – it will transform our entire day. After these matters have been contemplated, the next step is to internalize them in the heart. Then one’s *d'veykus* in his Torah learning will truly be a *d'veykus* in Hashem.

If a person learning Torah does not openly reveal a connection to Hashem’s will, or to His wisdom, or to His word, then he is not connected to Hashem as he learns Torah. Even more so, if one does is not *clear* about what Hashem’s will is, and what Hashem’s wisdom is, and what Hashem’s word is, then his connection to Torah is incomplete.

These words will be explained further, with Hashem’s help, as we continue. But what has been said here is a great opening and key for one who is beginning to learn about these concepts, and to begin understanding what Torah is about.

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