

LECH LECHA - DISCONNECTING

"GO FROM YOUR LAND" - THE TEST OF LEAVING BEHIND THE PAST

In *Parshas Lech Lecha*, Avraham Avinu is told by Hashem, "Go from your land, from your birthplace, from the house of your father, to the land which I will show you."

Our Sages list this as one of the "ten *nisyonos* (trials)" which Avraham was tested with, and we are also taught by our Sages the rule, "*Maaseh Avos, Siman L'Banim*" – "The actions of the forefathers is a sign for the children." Just as Avraham Avinu went through ten trials where

he was tested by Hashem, so does every soul go through "ten trials".

This does not mean that we are given the same exact tests as Avraham Avinu, but our tests are a reflection of those tests. We are not always told by Hashem to leave our country and move elsewhere, but the lesson of it always remains true in our own lives, where we are confronted with the spiritual test of having to leave behind our past in general.

Avraham Avinu's test was that he had to disconnect from his roots, and leave it all behind to go out there into the world. His country, his birthplace, the house of his father, were all different aspects that bound him to his past, and he was told to disconnect from it and leave it all behind, in order to become elevated. This shows us that there exists in the soul an ability to disconnect from that which we are powerfully connected to, to that which we feel permanence in, on This World.

THE JOURNEY OF THE SOUL

Before Hashem created the world, He created our souls. The Jewish nation was the "first" of Hashem's thoughts. Each of our souls has been existing for at least 5,777 years – that's our real age. However, this does not mean a person will automatically identify with his soul. The Sages say that "Moshiach will not come until all souls of the *"guf"* (the collective "body" of the Jewish people) are used up, and Rashi describes this *"guf"* (collective "body") as a place where all souls are contained. The souls come down onto this lowly world where they must all do Hashem's will and serve Him, and then return to Him eventually. But our root is in Heaven. Hashem decrees on our soul to come down here, to leave its roots – and this is like Avraham's test of being told to leave his birthplace.

When we first come down here, we didn't want to be here, and we feel like we've been taken away from our home. This is how we start out in life, and the Sages state that this is one of the reasons that an infant cries as soon as it enters the world. A fetus in its mother's womb learns Torah and it is in a place that is

entirely good, and it has no desire to leave. It is forced to leave when Hashem tells it that it must go out into the world. We are born forcibly. The baby's entrance into this world is by force and thus he cries. He has been severed from his source, where everything was good.

A child grows up in his parent's home and now his soul inside has come to get used to this new "home." Then he leaves home at some point and goes to kindergarten and then into first grade. Each time, he goes through some kind of disconnection from a previous state. There is the difficulty of transition from stage to stage. Every year in his development, a person keeps going through disconnections from his previous level. As the years go on, there are more and more disconnections. The child then goes on to *yeshiva* and to *mesivta* (high school); he learns how to be away from his parents, and he feels difficulty with this.

All of our life is a cycle of disconnection, connection, and disconnection again. We are born forcibly, but we are also forced to die when the time comes. We get used to the place

we are in – This World – and then we don't want to leave it. We are forced to be born, and then we get used to it and we need to be forced in order to leave the world.

In the way that Hashem has designed it, life moves us around from place to place. A person on this world grows more connected to it with time; he becomes chained to it. He is strongly attached to his family, to his house, to his possessions, to his friends, and to other things. These connections are eventually taken from a person, forcibly; he doesn't want to let go of them.

But Avraham Avinu was told "Go from your land, from your birthplace, from the house of your father." The soul becomes disconnected from its root in Heaven in order to come down onto this world, and at death, the soul doesn't want to leave this world, now that it has become attached to it. If a person lived a life in which he grew attached to materialism, he will suffer a disconnection from it upon death. But if a person lived a spiritual life, an internal kind of life, a Torah life – at death, he will only disconnect from

this world in the physical sense. The spiritual world, the inner world he

had lived through his *neshamah* on this world, does not become sev-

ered from him; it continues and it intensifies after death.

ONE MUST KNOW HOW TO DISCONNECT FROM THE PAST

In whatever stage a person is at in his life, though, there are always disconnections; there is always a cycle of connecting and disconnecting. If a person is not able to leave behind his past like Avraham *Avinu*, he doesn't know how to disconnect, and he won't be able to leave immaturity behind, and he continues his childish antics. There

are people who get older and supposedly mature, but they remain with a lot of immaturity, because it is too hard for them to disconnect from the past.

One needs to be aware that everything on this world is temporary; every time and period of your life is a temporary situation. There

is always past, present and future. One needs to be able to disconnect from the past and embrace a new future, which now becomes his present. Sometimes a person must disconnect totally from the past, and sometimes only partially, but there must always be some disconnection from the past, as part of one's *avodah* (inner task).

THE POWER OF ABSOLUTE CONNECTION

To understand this deeply, the depths of our *neshamah* (Divine soul) has a power to connect, on an absolute and eternal level, to Hashem. There are "three ties that are bound with each other – Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael". Our connection to Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael can never be severed. One does not leave these connections, *chas v'shalom*; there is no need to leave it just as Avraham was told to leave the home of Terach.

Terach was an idol worshipper and he was not a Jewish soul, so it was necessary for Avraham to be severed from his father Terach's home. But the depths of our *neshamah* contains an absolute connection to Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael. The *nisayon* (test) which we have on this world is: Will we form any absolute connection, other than with Hashem, Torah, and *Klal Yisrael*?

If one feels connected to anything other than Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael, he will be captured by that force, and he won't be able to fully connect to either Hashem, Torah, or Yisrael. The deep power in the soul to have absolute connection must be channeled to Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael. If it is used for anything else, it cannot fully connect to Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael.

Therefore Hashem made our life in a way that we must constantly disconnect from situations. When one is not a *bar daas* (a sensible, mature person), he has a painful time when he is separated from a situation, because he was never prepared for the disconnection. When he wasn't prepared for the disconnection, deep down he feels connected to the past situation.

The past is entirely imagination, as Rav Dessler writes. A person is

still connected to his past [which presently exists only in an imaginary realm, and not in reality] because he does not want to leave it; according to his perspective, he doesn't feel emotionally capable of disconnecting from the past. If a person can't disconnect from the past, he cannot "shake off the dust and rise." If he can't disconnect from a previous situation that was good, and surely if he can't disconnect from a situation in his life that is bad, he is really using his power of absolute connection to remain attached to something that is not to Hashem, Torah, or Yisrael.

One who is a *bar daas* realizes the truth of life, and he knows that there is only one absolute connection we need to have: to Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael. Then he understands that all other connections we have are temporary and that they are not absolute.

THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS WE ENJOY ON THIS WORLD ARE TEMPORARY

Even the deepest connections we have on this world to others are not forever. The bond between a father and a son, and a husband and wife, and other close relationships on this world, are not guaranteed to remain in the Next World. A hus-

band and wife in this lifetime won't necessarily be spouses in another lifetime; there is a concept of *zivug rishon* (first spouse) and *zivug shei-ni* (second spouse), and *Chazal* say that one must pray for a spouse lest someone else take away his spouse

from him; a person's spouse can be switched for someone else. Just because he is married to this spouse on this world doesn't mean that they will share a connection that is rooted in Above.

All connections with others that we have on this world to others are not absolute; what purpose, then, do they serve? They are all a *moshol* (parable) to get to the *nimshal* (lesson) – the lesson that they all teach is to show us that we can have an absolute connection - to Hashem, and to his Torah, and to the depth of the *neshamos* of *Klal Yisrael*.

This deep perspective towards life, when one understands it, changes his view entirely. The *nisayon* of Avraham *Avinu*, when he was told to leave his past behind, was not just a *nisayon* for Avraham *Avinu*, but a *nisayon* that comes to all people, for there is a rule of “*maaseh avos siman l’banim*”, “actions of the forefathers are the sign for the children.” All connections

on this world are temporary, and they are only here to help us understand what our relationship to Hashem must be like.

The father-son relationship, the father-daughter relationship, and all other close relationships, are all a *nisayon* to us: If we will attach ourselves too much to them, or if we will use them to get closer to Hashem. The father-son relationship, and the husband-wife relationship, and other deep relationships with others, are given to us by Hashem so that we can understand what it is like to have a deep attachment with another. We are meant to channel this power to become attached to Hashem - but not everyone sees it as a *moshol*. It is explained in *sefarim hakedoshim* that a father and son

might have even been enemies in a previous lifetime, and in the next lifetime, the father becomes the son and the son becomes the father. Or, it could be that their souls do not share the same soul root from Above, and they really have little to do with each other [in the higher, spiritual dimension]. If so, why are they brought together on this world into a father-son relationship?

It serves as a *moshol* (parable) to get to the *nimshal* (lesson). It is to show them that if a deep connection can be formed between a father and son [who may not even bear any relation in their soul root], there must be a deep connection that one can have with Hashem.

THE DETERMINING FACTOR

The less a person is aware of this, the more connected to the world he will be, and leaving the world will feel very hard for him. The *Gemara* says that *tzaddikim* have an easy time leaving this world, whereas the wicked have a painful time leaving the world, because the wicked have become very connected to this world as they were here. But if

someone lived internally – if he was connected to Hashem, to Torah, to *ruchniyus* (spirituality), he has a much easier time leaving the world when his time comes, because he feels less connected to this world.

That is the simple understanding of it, and now we are saying a deeper understanding: the transi-

tion at death is not simply affected by how connected a person was to this world or not. It is an issue of *what a person has acquired for his soul* as he lived on this world. If he realized on this world that all “connections” here are but temporary, he has an easier time disconnecting from it at death.

EVEN GAN EDEN IS NOT FOREVER

Here is an example of the difference between a temporary connection and a permanent connection.

We know that whatever connection we have to anything on this world must only be temporary, and this it is not forever. What about our soul, when it comes to settle in *Gan Eden* (and not *Gehinnom*, for *Gehinnom* is also a stage of transition in between this world and the next world, thus it is also tempo-

rary)? How much connection must it have to *Gan Eden*?

It would seem, simply speaking, that if we should view This World as a temporary dwelling that we are living in, *Gan Eden* is our true place where we live permanently. *Gan Eden* is the place where the *neshamos* enjoy spiritual bliss; it sounds like a place which we become eternally connected to, after we go there. But *Gan Eden* only

lasts within this 6000 year era we are in.¹ How much time do we have until the year 6000? After the year 6000, Hashem renews the world. Then what?

After 6000, the world is ‘destroyed’,² which is explained as a renewed world, and it will be the eternal *Olam HaBa*. So even *Gan Eden* is temporary! And even when a soul is in *Gan Eden*, it is not always there, because Chazal state

1 As explained by the Ramchal in *Derech Hashem* and *Daas Tevunos*

2 *Sanhedrin* 97b

that Torah scholars never have total *menuchah* (serenity), not in this world and not in the next.³ So even a person's place in *Gan Eden* does not stay the same.

Just as a person can wander in this world between different cities, towns, countries, so can the soul wander from place to place in *Gan Eden*. *Chazal* explain that sometimes a person's soul is judged on the day of his death and he receives a verdict from Heaven that he is not worthy of rising to the higher realms, and instead he is sent back as a *gilgul* (soul reincarnation) on

If one looks at This World as temporary connection, he might think that he does have permanent connections to other things which are spiritual, so he will separate himself from the connection to this world, which is a mixture of good and evil; and it is mostly evil and only partially good. It is a wonderful level if one reaches this under-

this world, in order to become meritorious, by having more Torah and mitzvos.

In either case, the soul does not always stay in one place in *Gan Eden*. If a person doesn't merit going to *Gan Eden*, he comes back to this world again – either so that he can become more meritorious for himself, or because he is needed for others (which is a separate discussion). If he is meritorious, he rises to higher realms, but he does not stay in one place there. He may come back down to this world in order to become meritorious for

himself, or because he is needed for others, or because he is needed in the communal sense (which is the *avodah* of *tzaddikim*), or he merits to rise to higher realms (and all souls will one day leave *Gan Eden* and go to *Olam HaBa*). But in either case, the soul never stays permanently in one place.

The superficial perspective is that this world is temporary and *Gan Eden* is permanent, but the truer and deeper perspective is that all connections are temporary. This is a huge overhaul in perspective.

THE DEEPER PERSPECTIVE

standing. However, it is still not the truthful perspective; it is like a body without a soul, because he is missing the deeper perspective.

The true perspective is that must not feel connected to anything, other than Hashem. When Avraham *Avinu* was told to leave his homeland, his *nisayon* was that he was

being told not to feel connected to anything except for Hashem. Not only was he being told to disconnect from his physical homeland and family. He was being told that he must make an inward change: not to feel connected to anything except for Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael.

PRACTICALLY WORKING - DETACHING FROM THIS WORLD

Now let us understand how we can live by this concept on a more practical level: One needs to slowly go about detaching from This World, and in a sensible manner, without acting too extreme.

But it is not only This World that we need to feel disconnected from. That is only the external part of our job. The inner part of our job is to acquire the deep perspective that we must not feel powerfully connected to anything other than Hashem.

Compare this to a person who needs to build a house, and he first has to buy a plot of land for the

house to go in. Does he buy a few inches of land, or a mound of dirt, or a bigger space of land? He will only be able to build the house if he buys a considerable amount of land. When one disconnects himself from This World, there are two different attitudes he can have. Either he will want to disconnect from just This World, or he will take this perspective even deeper, and he will be ready to disconnect from everything, even from good things – because he realizes that the only powerful connection he must feel is towards Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael.

One needs *daas* (mental aware-

ness) in order to acquire anything. The more *daas* a person has, the better of a quality his acquisition will have. Disconnecting from this world enables a person to “acquire” [the Next World]. But what will he acquire? He will acquire [the Next World] according to the quality of his *daas* – according to how much he was willing to disconnect from.

These are deep words about the soul. Avraham *Avinu* is compared to the *neshamah* (soul) and Sarah is compared to the *guf* (body). A Torah scholar is also called “*neshamah*”, and the Torah is called the “*neshamah*” of the world. In order to live a life of *neshamah* on This

³ *Berachos 64a*

World (in spite of the fact that we also have a body), a person must not only feel disconnected from

the materialism of This World, but he must ultimately feel a disconnection from anything other than

Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael.

LEAVING BEHIND THE SUKKAH

Here is a practical example that may help us actualize this concept.

We have just left Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkos. On Sukkos, when a person takes the Four Species and he sat in the *sukkah*, if he feels even a little holiness, he could feel a connection to the Four Species and to the *sukkah*. It is hard to leave behind the *sukkah* and the four species. If someone didn't feel that it was hard to disconnect from it, he is simply not sensitive to the spiritual. But if someone did

feel that it was hard to part from the *sukkah* and from the four species, he now has an *avodah* to go deeper than this. He can be aware that "Although I have parted ways from the *sukkah* and from the Four Species, I am not parting ways from the presence of the *Shechinah* which had settled upon the *sukkah*!"

We cannot invalidate the difficulty in leaving behind the holy objects used in our performance of *mitzvos*. There is a well-known story about the Vilna *Gaon* on

his deathbed, when he was holding tightly onto his *tzitzis* and he cried over how much he did not want to part from it. But it is this pain of disconnection which brings a person to the true perspective. A person leaves the *sukkah* and he will miss it, and he certainly needs to feel pained at leaving it. But we also know that the *Shechinah* comes to dwell on the *sukkah*, as the *Gemara* says; and a person can always remain connected to it.

IN SUMMARY

This is the depth about life.

When it comes to disconnecting from the materialism of this world, one needs to disconnect from it slowly and sensibly. It is painful for a person to detach from it, but that is man's *avodah*. He must eventually reach the point where it does not feel painful for him to be disconnected from This World, and that will be the root his spiritual success on this world.

The next stage in the *avodah* is to disconnect even from our con-

nection to the spiritual, such as the example of leaving the *sukkah* behind. At first a person must certainly feel that it is painful to leave behind a *mitzvah*; he had been connected to it and now he is leaving it, so it should certainly feel painful. He must feel that he will miss the *sukkah* when he leaves it. But after he feels this pain, he must then realize that this pain can bring him to the more inner understanding: although he is leaving behind the *sukkah*, he is not becoming disconnected from the *Shechinah* that

came to the *sukkah*.

This is only one example, but there are many more examples of this concept. When a person loses a parent, this is very hard and painful for him; he is aware of the loss. But along with the pain, he can come to understand who his real "Father" is – his eternal Father whom he will always have. He has then succeeded in using the parent-child relationship as a *moshol* (parable) to get to the *nimshal* (lesson).

IN CONCLUSION

This deep way to live life enables a person to detach from the materialism of This World, from the view of the body, and to instead use the "tools" and "garments" which

Hashem has given us, as a way to disconnect from everything else that is other than Hashem, Torah, and *Klal Yisrael*; so that we can channel the power of absolute con-

nection towards a complete, true connection with Hashem.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS [FROM BILVAVI Q&A ARCHIVE]

HOW TO REACH HEART-RECOGNITION OF HASHEM

Question:

I understand from the Rav's approach that emunah must be coming from our heart, that we must be able to feel our awareness of Hashem, as opposed to merely knowing of Him in our intellect, because we cannot base our emunah in Hashem on our intellect, since our intellect is limited and we can become mistaken through it. So how indeed do we reach emunah of the heart? I don't mean to ask about how to internalize our intellectual emunah into our heart, rather I mean to ask: How do we start directly with emunah in our heart?

Answer:

The depth of our soul's power to have emunah is from the same place in you where you recognize your own existence, the truth of your havayah. It is from your own havayah that you can recognize the absolute havayah, which is the truth of His infinite existence. For a Jew is an actual "portion of G-d from above". Understand that well. When a person penetrates into the depth of the truth of his soul, after he has purified the soul's outer layers, he then reaches his very havayah, and then he can recognize the absolute havayah, the truth of the Infinite. This is the root way of recognizing

our Creator, by recognizing our own existence and from that very same place of self-recognition we can recognize that the existence of all creations is only allowed due to the truth of His havayah, His infinite existence.

When one is beginning to surround this perception, it is called ohr makif, where his awareness of Hashem is called emunah (*belief in Hashem*). When one internalizes it, it is ohr pnimi, and it is called hakarah (*recognition*). In these short lines, we have written the pnimiyus, the inner depth and the truth, of all of life!!!

CHANGING OUR THINKING PATTERNS

Question:

1) Would it be accurate to say that our machshavas (*thoughts*) and feelings come hand in hand with the life force from Hashem, perhaps as the "catcher" of the life force He sends that is then intended to show us what we are to rectify? That is, the goal is to extract the life force from the initial experience of thought and feeling that is concealing how Hashem is doing everything and tempting us to go by our survival instincts with our own counsel?

Answer:

Yes! In an average person, the "initial thought" is like the shell that comes before the fruit, the kelipah kodemes l'pri, and this initial thought enters the person to show the person how he needs to sort out the evil in his thoughts. Whereas if a person has undergone much self-purification, his initial thought is a semblance of ruach hakodesh, which comes from the deeper intellect in the neshamah that can be beamed into one's normal intellect, showing him how needs to think and act.

Question:

2) Would it be too simplistic to say that once we come to see how our particular set of thoughts and

feelings are the kelipah, and we have strengthened our emunah that Hashem is doing everything, we are intended then to reflect the life force directly into Torah, chesed, mitzvahs and prayer so that the vitality we would otherwise invest in acting upon what we think, feel and do attaches instead to Torah avoda chesed and mitzvahs and we follow that good inclination?

Answer:

Yes.

Question:

3) When we do the above with regards to overcoming lusts, urges, pleasures and other natural inclinations, thereby quieting the body from going with the natural will in favor of Torah, avoda, chesed and mitzvahs, is that called holiness (*kedushah*)?

Answer:

Evil serves good, and that is how evil reaches its own tikkun (*repair*), and this is the spark of holiness that lays inside every evil.

Question:

4) How do we answer those who say we are "hurting ourselves" by not "standing up" for our

feelings?

Answer:

Because we should "stand up to our feelings" only if those feelings are pure and proper [*not if our feelings aren't aligned with Hashem's will*].

Question:

5) Has our generation acclimated to the kelipas (*to the evil forces*) and developed tactics for dealing with each other just within the kelipas without consideration for breaking out (*hence all the fighting and assertiveness*)?

Answer:

That is true on a partial level.

Question:

6) And if so, is the breakdown of all the worldly systems supposed to wake us up to this?

Answer:

Yes.

Question:

7) How can we bring ourselves to see that our power, intellect and systems are not us and that

it is time to “break out” of the kelipas if we have never even heard of an inner world or any of the tools of hisbodedus, nullification, and emunah due to curricula in the school systems?

How can people find a way to learn what they

never heard of if they don't want to deviate from what they have been taught?

Answer:

What is needed is 1) To train our thoughts to

think deeper, as well as (2) To awaken our feelings to search for more truth.

SPIRITUALITY VS. SELF-ABSORPTION

Question:

I have big spiritual aspirations, and they are endless. In the course of my life, I want to reach the highest spiritual level within my reach. I want to reach the highest possible level of closeness and intimacy with G-d. To fulfill my aspirations, I learn the sefarim of Kaballah: the sefarim of the Arizal and the Reshash. I try to have all the holy intentions, and I learn about them once every week or two weeks, because there is so much wisdom and true knowledge there about how to

reach closeness with G-d.

I have several friends, though, who tell me that my aspirations do not come from a pure place, and that my aspirations are a result of being totally self-absorbed, and that it's all about “me” wanting more and more levels for myself to reach, and that it has nothing to do with avodas Hashem. So I want to know if there is any indicator by which I can know if my endless aspirations are coming from a good, pure place, or if they are not, chas v'shalom.

Answer:

Assess yourself and see if you have any traces of pure “lishmah” (*selfless motives*) in how you act, and to what extent. Also assess yourself to see if you are willing to forego something for a friend, and how much you can do that lishmah. Another thing for you to assess is to become aware of how much you think about yourself, [*versus*] how much you think about Hashem, and how much you think about others.

INNER VOICE

Question:

I once heard the Rav say in one of the shiurim that a person is able to hear an “internal voice” in himself, or to use guided imagery, in order to connect to the mind's intuition. Is this correct? How can this be reconciled with what the Rav has said that it is possible for a person to hear the wrong internal voices?

goes out each day from Har Sinai and announces that people should do teshuvah. This refers to the voice of Hashem. The voice of prophecy, which used to be revealed in the past, is also the voice of Hashem – but it has ceased. Besides for this, though, there is the voice of a Jew's personal neshamah (*Divine soul*), which can be heard at all times.

the person will hear a voice that is a mixture of the spiritual and the material, an unclear sound. Therefore, as long as a person has not yet purified his being, hearing the internal voice contains a danger, because it will be an unclear and imprecise sound, and if one follows it, it can trip him on his path.

Answer:

The voice of Hashem, which spoke the Ten Expressions and the Ten Commandments, is still existent today, in its original strength. The Sages also said that every day, a bas kol (*Heavenly voice*)

However, since the soul is covered with a body that is coarse and indifferent to the spiritual, the soul's voice is usually not heard. Even if a person does hear it, the coarseness of the body prevents a person from hearing a totally spiritual sound, and

Many people in our generation have tried to hear the internal voice, through various means, and what they heard was not only unclear, it was mixed [*with spiritual and material messages intermixed with each other*], which caused them to mislead themselves as well as others, with messages that were an inter-mixture of truth and fantasy together.

UNCOVERING YOUR PERSONAL SHARE IN TORAH

Question:

The Rav has said that the main kind of Torah learning is to learn in order to know how to fulfill all of the mitzvos, and that besides for this, one also needs to learn certain parts of Torah which are aligned with his personal soul root (*shoresh haneshamah*). The Rav has said that we see this from the face that there were some Gedolim did not learn Kaballah (*the mystical secrets of the Torah*) [*for this part of Torah was not needed according to their personal shoresh haneshamah*]. The Rav

referred me to the words of the Shulchan Aruch HaRav in Hilchos Talmud Torah (1:4) who writes, “The Sages of truth said that every soul, in order to reach its tikkun (*repair*), needs to study the PaRDeS (*the four parts of Torah, which includes Pshat [surface understanding], Remez [hints, gematria, etc.], Drush [homiletics, agadta, etc.] and Sod [the mystical parts of Torah, the Kaballah, etc.] according to one's capability of comprehension. One needs to know all of it, and this is the complete tikkun (repair) for the soul.*” From those words it

is apparent that each person needs to study all of the PaRDes, and it is just that he is only required to do so according to his level of comprehension – and it seems that vice versa, if a person is not able to know and comprehend all of PaRDeS, then he is not obligated to know all of PaRDes.

But how can a person know what the capabilities of his soul are, when it comes to learning all of the parts of Torah? How can a person know how much he can or cannot understand in the Torah? If one spends time learning a certain part of Torah

in favor of other parts, maybe this is stemming from laziness, even if he's exerting himself to understand what he's trying to understand. After having this question I later came across a statement in the name of the kaballists that the colleagues of Rabbi Akiva rebuked Rabbi Akiva for learning matters of agadta and told him that he should instead learn the laws of negaim and ohalos, and this was because they looked into the soul of Rabbi Akiva and saw that his main share in Torah was in halachah [*specifically, of negaim and ohalos*] as opposed to agadta. The

kaballists then cite the words of the Arizal that each person needs to learn the areas of Torah that are according to his personal soul root. This is brought in sefer Shaalos U'Teshuvos Rav Pealim: Yoreh Deah 1:56). It seems from this that even Rabbi Akiva didn't know his personal root and what his personal share in Torah should be, until they told him.

So, the question is: Nowadays, who can tell a person what kind of neshamah (*soul*) he has?

Answer:

The very pnimiyus (*inner essence*) of our neshamah is at first hidden from a person, due to internal "bribery" – various self-serving interests (*retzonos*). When one nullifies these retzonos, he reaches hishtavus (*equality*), and then he can know what his personal share is, in which area of Torah learning he should be spending his exertion on.

NEFESH HABEHAIMIS & NEFESH ELOKIS

Question:

1) The Rav has said in the shiurim that for most people, the task of knowing the soul must be worked upon "from the bottom up", that one should first learn, recognize, work with, and repair the nefesh habehaimis (*animal soul*) and afterwards reveal the neshamah. However, the Rav said in "Getting To Know Your Feelings" that a large part of fixing the soul is to fix the nefesh habehaimis, but the main part of the remedy must come from the light of the nefesh Elohis (*the G-dly soul*), which implies that a person mainly needs to work with the nefesh Elohis. That also implies that the beginning of the remedy for the soul is to work with the nefesh Elohis. So where do we begin working with? Do we mostly need to work with the nefesh habehaimis and less with the nefesh Elohis, or vice versa?

2) As for knowing about our nefesh habehaimis (*animal soul*), which the Rav has explained as a part of our task in knowing and repairing our soul, is this referring to the series of the Four Elements, meaning that we need to recognize well the four elements in our animal soul? Is a person also able to know about the "animal soul" from learning "Getting To Know Your Soul" (*Da Es Nafshecha*)? What is the way by which a person can know his animal soul (*nefesh habehaimis*)?

3) It is clear that it is a difficult task even to fix our "animal soul" and that it takes years of amassing

much knowledge about it, with a vast amount of inner work, and a major will to change. For most people, who are still found at the level of the "animal soul", is it also possible for them to reach the higher levels of the soul (*the nefesh Elohis, Ruach, Neshamah, Chayah and Yechidah*)? In relation to this question, is the series of "Inner Silence" (*Da Es Hisbodedutecha*), "Torah Way To Enlightenment" (*Da Es Nishmatecha*), "Reaching Your Essence" (*Da Es Havayasecha*), and "Loving Your Fellow Jew" (*Da Es Reicha*), etc. about "shining" the higher levels of the soul upon a person? Or are these shiurim and sefarim meant to guide a person to actually reach these higher levels of the soul, even within the current level of one's animal soul?

Answer:

1) It is recommended to recognize one's strongest positive power, or to at least recognize one's most revealed positive power, of one's Nefesh Elohis (*G-dly soul*), which is the source of all G-dly blessing, which illuminates the soul. Through increased connection to one's strongest positive power, one receives a greater intensity of his Nefesh Elohis. (*Understandably, this is besides for learning Torah and keeping the mitzvos*). The amount of how much one needs to make use of this is not the same with each person, but the general definition is that a person needs to increase the strength of his Nefesh Elohis. Therefore each person needs to

examine how much he needs to make use of his most positive power, both in his nefesh Elohis and nefesh habehaimis.

2) "Da Es Nafshecha" (*Getting To Know Your Soul*) is general knowledge about the soul which can be understood by all people. However, the series of the "Four Elements" is a guide of how one can reach his personal soul. Through "Getting To Know Your Soul" one can work with the general roots of the soul, and through the "Four Elements" series one can recognize his private soul. Then one can know the order of what he needs to work on, in his personal avodah.

3) It has been explained above that a person needs to strengthen his strongest or most revealed positive ability (*of his Nefesh Elohis*), and therefore, one should also correspondingly work on his spiritual growth. However, a person needs to become clear about his "animal soul" (*nefesh habehaimis*), because if not, one's connection to the spiritual will be unclear and it will be a mixture of truth with fantasy. A person needs to set aside special time for each kind of self-work. Each area of self-work requires its own period of time where one works on it, and one should not mix one kind of self-work with another. Generally a person should not work on two areas at once, because the secret of success is to stay focused.



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