Shovavim - 004 Repairing Man

The Sin of Spilling Seed and Fixing it through Emunah

The root of all mitzvos is *Emunah* (to have faith in Hashem). *Emunah* alone contains the key to everything, as it is written, "*A righteous person shall live by his faith*."[1]

Emunah fixes all problems - and all sins.

The sin of spilling seed (wasting one's seed) can be compared to the following parable.

Let's say a person gives money to a pauper, and before it gets to the pauper's hand, the money falls to the ground. The donor gave, but there was no one to receive it. When a man spills his seed, it is like giving something away, with nothing to receive it. The man's seed is being given away, and there is no wife there to receive it from him.

But if a person gains the power of *Emunah*, a person can become a container to receive all that has been lost, retroactively, and in this way, he rectifies the sin of spilling his seed.

In all of Creation, there exist Heavenly illuminations (*oros*) as well as containers to receive them (*keilim*). The illuminations need to go into the containers in order for a person to receive any Heavenly sustenance, so they need to be connected together. The point that connects them together is **daas** (higher, spiritual understanding that a human being can reach), and this is the usual case in how a person receives any Heavenly illuminations, for *daas* is always known as the 'connecting' force in Creation. That is the first level of how one receives Heavenly sustenance: with the more he gains *daas*.

When a person grows spiritually, he can reach a level in which he doesn't even need *daas* to receive the illuminations, because he can go even above his *daas*. Going above one's *daas* is that one attains the quality of *bittul*, to be totally nullified to Hashem. When a person feels completely nullifies to Hashem, he in unified and integrated with Him. This is the second, higher level of one receives Heavenly illuminations, and it is called *lo yeda*, "no *daas*" [because it is the level which is beyond one's *daas*.]

There is an even higher level than this well that a person can reach, an even higher plane that exists that is even beyond the sublime level of *lo yeda*. It is called "*lo yoda elyon*", the "higher level of above *daas*". On such a level, a person doesn't even need a container to receive Heavenly illuminations, because here the person has reached a level in which the illuminations are able to reach the person directly. When a person reaches such a level, he is able to fix all his sins – even the

sin of spilling seed, which is known in the sefarim hakedoshim as the root of all sins. If a person commits the sin of spilling his seed, *chas v'shalom* (G-d forbid), what is going on as this happens? There is something being given away from the person, but there is no one to receive it from him; there is no container that it can enter. His sperm goes to waste.

But if a person truly gains the ability of *Emunah*, a person can acquire a container that receives all the lost sperm – **retroactively.**

This is a way to do *Teshuvah* for all of one's sins: through acquiring *Emunah*. And in particular, *Emunah* rectifies the sin of spilling seed, for *Emunah* makes one into a spiritual container that can receive all Heavenly illumination, whereupon he can receive everything that was lost until now.

However, the Sages say that one is not allowed to purposely sin *chas v'shalom* and say, "I will sin and repent later."

The Sin of Gay Behavior and How To Repair It[2]

All sins are rooted in Adam's sin

This chapter deals with the sin of one who engaged in gay behavior and he wants to fix his sin. First we will look into the roots of this sin in order to understand how to fix it, together with Heavenly assistance.

As is well-known, the root of all sins lies in Adam's sin, when he ate from the Tree of Knowledge. The sin of gay behavior is no different than other sins; it also is rooted in Adam's sin. However, it is clear that we cannot totally learn how to fix this sin from the case of Adam, in which there was only one man in the world (and hence no one for him to engage in gay behavior with). We are only speaking of the depth behind the sin, which we can still learn from the story of Adam, in spite of the fact that he has no man whom he felt a lust for. But there is still one very practical point to be learned from this discussion which we will discuss soon, with the help of Hashem.

Four instances in the Torah of Gay Behavior

[To give a brief summary of what is to come: In the Torah, there are four instances of gay behavior: Cham, Potifar, the city of Sodom, and Amalek.]

The first man recorded in the Torah who had a sexual lust for another man was Cham, the son of Noach. It is written**[3]**"*And Cham, father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness.*" The Sages have two opinions of what this means[4]: According to one opinion, Cham castrated his father so that his father wouldn't be able to have children, and according to the second opinion, Cham engaged in conjugal relations with his father Noach, who was drunk and asleep.

The second instance in the Torah of gay behavior was by the city of Sodom, who demanded that Lot give away his guests.[5] The Sages[6] explain that they wanted to rape his guests; Lot instead tried to appease them by agreeing to give away his daughters to be raped, but they refused, because they wanted men to rape.

The third instance of gay behavior in the Torah was by Potifar, who had a desire for Yosef.[7]

Finally, there is a fourth instance of gay behavior recorded in the Torah. It is written regarding the cursed nation of Amalek, "*They attacked you on the way.*" Rashi[8] explains this to mean that Amalek acted gay with the Jewish nation.

These four instances of gay behavior are four different lessons about gay behavior. As we will see, there are four different causes why a man would wish to act gay with another man, and each of these causes can show us a different solution to the problem.

The Gay Behavior of Cham: Selfishness

First we will examine the first kind of gay behavior: Cham, who committed a gay act with his father, Noach, according to one opinion in the Sages.

Before Hashem brought the Flood, there was a big problem in the world: adultery. The generation was so lustful that even the animals were mating with opposite species; this corruption angered Hashem to bring the Flood and destroy the world.

After the Flood, Cham started a new trend: to mate with one's own gender. Cham brought about an entirely new kind of corruption: to lust after your own gender. He introduced to the world that a man can have a desire for another man.

The natural way of the world is that a man needs a woman to mate with, and a woman needs to receive from a man. The man is the giver, and the woman is the receiver. This is the way Hashem designed the world. But when a man mates with another man, there is no one to receive what he has to offer.

Slavery represents this idea. A slave cannot own anything; anything he acquires goes to his master. He cannot receive anything, and he cannot own a legal wife. He is man without a woman.

When a man has no one to give to and no one to receive what he has to offer, he is all alone. Hashem created the world for man and woman to get married and merge into one being; when a man has no wife, he is all by himself. (This is also the depth behind why Amalek acted gay with the Jewish people, because Amalek's aim was to create a separateness and lack of unity in Creation; Amalek was therefore gay in order to wreak havoc on Creation.)

Slaves are suspected of gay behavior.[9] Children as well are a target for being molested see.[10] There is a similarity between slaves and children, and this will help us understand the root of this kind of gay behavior.

Slaves do as they please, so it is understandable that they are suspected of being gay.[11] But why are children a common target of gay behavior? The answer is because both slaves and children share one thing in common: they lack a connection to another person, and this is the root of their gay behavior. How do we see this?

We know that a child's conjugal act under the age of nine years is not regarded as anything binding[12] (see). Simply speaking, a child isn't mature enough physically and therefore his attempt at conjugal actions are not regarded as being a conjugal act. But it is more than that; he is not a *bar daas* (mature). To be a *bar daas* essentially means that one has the power to form connections; *daas* always refers to connection, as it is written, *"And Adam knew Chavah."* A child's conjugal act cannot form any connection; he is alone and he cannot have a wife, because he isn't emotionally capable of such a connection. That is why children can be associated with gay behavior, because they are all by themselves and cannot have a wife.

So children can have gay behavior because they are by themselves, and slaves act gay because they have no one to receive from them. They are both associated with gay behavior because they are alone.

This is the root of Cham's gay behavior towards his father Noach. His act of intimacy with his father is not about causing a connection, but rather from his own selfish desire to take pleasure. He was all about disparity, and in this way he resembles Amalek, the root of disparity in Creation [within their very "desires for intimacy"].

The Gay Behavior of Potifar: Perverting Creation

The second kind of gay behavior we find is by Potifar, who had a desire to have physical relations with Yosef. Yosef was the overseer of Egypt and was sustaining it. He was being like a man, being a giver, by taking care of Egypt. The deep reason why Potifar desired him was because he wanted to turn Yosef into a taker. Potifar essentially was trying to go against the design of Creation. Because he desired to only take pleasure, and not give pleasure – as we can see from the fact that he desired Yosef - he was punished by Hashem with castration; since he didn't want to give, he was punished that he cannot have children and that he cannot sustain others.

How do we see that Potifar was trying to turn Yosef into a taker?

In a marriage between a man and a woman, there is a giver and a receiver. In their marital union, the man gives the enjoyment, and the woman receives the enjoyment. The real pleasure is enjoyed by the woman, who receives the pleasure from her husband.) However, most of the time, the husband isn't motivated entirely by giving, and he also wants to take a little of the pleasure, so he ends up enjoying it also. He also has some degree of taking. But even if this is his level, at least he has some motivation to give pleasure also.(If the man does not desire to give pleasure to his wife and he instead only wants to take, he becomes a taker; both the man and the woman are then takers.

This is unlike the person who lusts after a man. A man lusting after another man only wants to take pleasure, and he doesn't wish to give it. There is no pleasure to the man whom he has relations with.[13] Only the person who commits the gay act receives pleasure, but he cannot give it to his partner.

This shows us that another cause for gay behavior can be because the man wishes to defy his nature of being a man, which is to be a giver and not a taker, and thus he is attempting to switch around the way things are supposed to be. He perverts Creation in trying to go against the way Hashem designed it. A man is supposed to be a giver, not be a taker. The man who does the gay act is not being manly. He is acting feminine, by trying to just receive pleasure, which is a woman's role.

The Gay Behavior of Sodom: Haughtiness

The third kind of gay behavior we find is by the city of Sodom. (Sodom wanted Lot's guests to be gay with them; Sodom's gay behavior has to do with their other evil ways. Sodom was against being kind, because they didn't want to have to need others. That was essentially their root of why they also had gay behaviors.)

This kind of gay behavior contains the key reason to all gay behavior.

Before Adam was created, he was alone. This put into all of us the ability to be "alone"; it is an ability that can be used for good or bad. When a man uses the power of being alone for evil, he is gay. When a person is haughty, he also misuses the power of being "alone" for his own evil, egotistical purposes.

Gay Behavior In The Era Preceding Moshiach

Rav Nachman of Breslov writes that the most impure evil that exists – the "50th Gate of Impurity" – is the sin of gay behavior, and the root of gay behavior is caused by the trait of **gaavah** – haughtiness,

or arrogance, or conceit.[14] In the beginning state of Creation, Adam was alone; there was only man with no woman. This was the power of "alone" that was holy and good.[15] Since the rule is that Hashem created equally opposing forces of evil for all holiness that there is, there is also an evil kind of "alone" that exists, in which man feels that he doesn't need woman.

At the beginning of Creation, this power of being "alone" was in its holy form. Now, when we are in the period of *ikvesa d'meshicha* (the footsteps of Moshiach), the light of the beginning of Creation returns, but it has returned in an evil form. Our avodah during the Final Days is to use that original light of Creation, the power to be "alone", and return it back to its holy root. When a man's nature to be alone without a woman is misunderstood, it can become translated into a desire for gay behavior.

A gay person's problem is thus that because he wants to remain alone, and this is rooted in his deep haughtiness that has become so dominant in his life. He wants to be completely "independent" and not have to need anyone else in his life. That is the root of the whole problem.

The solution to the problem, then, is that he to learn how to return the power of being "alone" to its root, which is good. There is nothing wrong, in essence, with the wish that a man has to be alone. The need to be alone is actually the root state of mankind, for Adam was first created alone. But when the wish to be alone is used for evil, it can be the root of why a man lusts after another man; he wishes to be alone from the true union of man and woman, by seeking out men whom he can indulge with in and get pleasure from, yet not have to be responsible for them to give to them. He is using the power of "alone" for evil. The way to rectify this is by returning to the good kind of "alone."

When a man chooses to be alone and thus he does not get married – or if he is married, but he lacks a true connection with his own wife – if he looks very deep into himself, he can discover that the root of his problem is that he is really being haughty. He is full of *gaavah*\haughtiness, and in fixing his *gaavah*, the problem of wishing to be independent on others, will be treated at its root.

When a man and woman achieve a connection in their marital union and he gives pleasure to her, by knowing that he needs her because he need someone to give to, not only does he give to her and fulfill his role as a man, but he realizes that deep down he is dependent on her, because if not for her, he would have no one whom he could really give to. And if he can't give to anyone, he is abandoning his role as a man, for it is his role to be a giver. When this is his understanding towards marital relations with his wife, the man essentially fulfills what he lacks: that he needs another person in his life, and he cannot be alone.

But when a man chooses to be gay, it's all because deep down he haughty, because he doesn't feel that he is lacking. Thus, he wishes to be independent of others, because he feels like he doesn't need anybody else, and that is the root of his mistake. He needs to correct this erroneous belief at its root and realize that he needs a wife in order to be complete, and that will solve his gay tendencies.

Thus, the solution for a gay person then to feel that he is missing something in his life. If a man wants to be gay, it must be that he is missing what it means to be together with another person whom he can give pleasure to. (Thus, to be together with another man defeats this purpose, because the other person doesn't receive any real pleasure from the union, as we brought before from the words of Chazal.[16]

Summary

Altogether, we have found three reasons for gay behavior. One cause is because a person doesn't want to give pleasure and he only wants to take pleasure; therefore, he engages in a relationship in which only he enjoys and takes pleasure, and there is no one to receive his pleasure. (The solution for

such gay behavior is to become a giver of pleasure, and not to be a taker of pleasure).

Another cause for gay behavior is that a person wants to switch around the way the world is supposed to be; he wants to defy the laws of nature that Hashem created the world with. In other words, he doesn't want his role as a man – he doesn't act manly, because he'd rather be more feminine (by being a taker).

[Although this sounds similar to the first cause, it is not the same thing. In the first cause of gay behavior, the root of the problem is because the person would rather be a taker of pleasure than a giver of pleasure. The second cause, though, also involves this factor of wanting to be a taker, but it is rooted in the fact that the man would be rather be more feminine than masculine.]

A third cause for gay behavior is that a person wants to remain alone, because he feels like he doesn't need anybody. He is too independent. It can get to the point that a person is so conceited with himself that he thinks of himself as sort of like a G-d, which was the problem that Pharoah developed, as well as many other people throughout history.

[The solution for this, as was mentioned, is that if he is single, he needs to get married, so that he can realize that he is an incomplete being by himself. And if one is already married, he needs to feel like he needs his wife, because if not for her than he has no one whom he can give to; this will help him become more connected to his wife and thus lose his gay tendencies as a result].

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[1] Chavakuk 2:4; see Talmud Bavli, Makkos 24a

[2] The translation here is an adaptation from a shiur given during the days of Shovavim, and it is printed in Sefer Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh on Chanukah (p.158-172). This is a chapter that deals with sensitive material and thus, it should be used very sensitively. Much of the material of the original Hebrew chapter has been omitted due to the heavy and esoteric nature of this material. Here the basic points have been translated and condensed for the sake of clarity. Nothing has been added in this English translation, but it has been rewritten in a way that offers repetition of matters that were not in the original Hebrew version, so that the practical outcomes of these matters can be clear. Any editor's notes, not from the author, have been added in brackets within the text.

[3] Beraishis 9:20

[4] see Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 70a

[5] Beraishis 19:5

[6] see Midrash Rabbah 50:5

[7] see Talmud Bavli, Sotah 13b

[8] Devorim 25:18

[9] Talmud Bavli, Berachos 45a

[10] Talmud Bavli, Gittin 57b

[11] see Talmud Bavli, Kesubos 11a

[12] Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 69b

[13] see Talmud Bavli, Kereisos 3a

[14] Sefer HaMiddos: Gaavah

[15] In Da Es Atzmecha\"Getting To Know Your Self" in which the Rav explains the well-known power of being "alone", the power to have hisbodeus (solitude) and feel totally alone with Hashem, which can solve so many problems and stress. The Rov warns, however, that although the power of being "alone" is the strongest ability that we possess, and that it is really man's nature to be alone, it can still be used for evil, such as when a person becomes self-absorbed and haughty towards others, since he feels like he doesn't need others anyway. In this chapter, the Rov is saying that an even more evil abuse of the power to be "alone" is when it is misunderstood by a man to be alone from real relationships, which will lead to his gay behavior.

[16] *Rashi* in *Kerisos 3a*

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