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## Bilvavi Part 5 - 025 Talking with Hashem about Emunah

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### 1.

Is there a Jew who doesn't believe in Hashem? We cannot find such a Jew in the world. In the depths of every Jew's heart, *emunah* is there, and it's permanent. *Emunah* is hidden deep in our soul, in the innermost layers of our soul.

However, most people – even total believers, who keep the entire Torah and do all the *mitzvos* – do not even recognize this part of themselves.

*Emunah* is the very essence of our soul, and in that place in ourselves, there are no questions about Hashem.

This deep place in ourselves has no room for questions, and thus it requires no “avodah”. Whatever “avodah” we do is thus only involving the lower layers of our soul.

Our mission is that since we know that we have this deep part in ourselves that has no doubts about Hashem – clear, unshakable *emunah* – we must extend this deep internal awareness to the rest of our soul as well, all the way to even the most external part of ourselves.

### 2.

The best way to reach our *emunah* (albeit the most difficult) is to awaken the innermost point of one's soul. Upon reaching the innermost point of our soul, *emunah* is revealed forth from it, and it can

extend to the other external layers of our self.

Because our innermost point is the deepest part of our self, it cannot be reached through what a person is used to. It is so hidden from us and it is covered over by so many barriers that a person doesn't even feel that it is there at all.

If a person doesn't feel his innermost point, how then can he ever hope to reveal it?

There is a way to reach it – through *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice). We see this from the story of Reb Eliezer ben Durdaya, who reached his essence by being ready to sacrifice everything to get there.

However, normally speaking, it is very difficult for a person to uncover *mesirus nefesh*. People only exercise *mesirus nefesh* in the rare circumstance of having to die over the three cardinal sins; such situations are Heaven-sent and do not often occur. No one has *mesirus nefesh* unless they feel major pressure due to external circumstances - unless a person is on an exceptionally high spiritual level. Therefore, there is almost no one who is able to take the path of *mesirus nefesh* to reach his innermost point.

### 3.

The more recommended way to reach our *emunah* is to reflect deeply about *emunah*, with our minds. A person should think deeply as follows: There is only One who is in charge of everything in the universe – Hashem.

One should think about this first on an intellectual level, realizing how Hashem is indeed in charge of every small thing that goes on, that He watches everything that's going on (*hashgacha pratit* – Divine Providence).

### 4.

After a person contemplates this in his mind and is clear about – how only Hashem is running the world – he should then continue to the next step: to talk to himself words that are *emunah*-oriented.

It is written, “*I believed, for I spoke.*” The great commentators of this *posuk* explained it to mean that through the power of “*I spoke*” – speaking about *emunah* – that is precisely how we instill in ourselves *emunah*: by speaking about the Creator!

A person should get used to always verbalizing to himself words that are *emunah*-oriented, all the time. This is the great rule of life – *emunah*.

*Emunah* is the life-sustaining energy of our life – it is the soul of man. Without *emunah*, life is nothing. And we need clear, strong *emunah*.

Because *emunah* is the main aspect of our life, a person always has to talk words of *emunah*. He should repeat to himself, both mentally and verbally: “Only Hashem runs the world. All of my life is essentially about Him. Whatever happens to me is all from Him, even when it seems to me that so-and-so was responsible.”

One should keep repeating to himself: “This or that person did not do it to me. It was Hashem Himself who did it. For all of my life, all I am involved with is Him.”

It is even better if a person talks these words directly with Hashem, and he can speak even in first-person: “I know, *Ribono shel olam*, that what that person did to me was all from You. I am confident that You love me and that You only did it for my good, because I know that all You do is good.”

In this way a person should get used to talking to Hashem his whole life, with simple words, like when you talk to a friend (and even more than how you talk to a friend). Constantly talk with Hashem, and don't look to others for hope – know that only Hashem is the address for everything in your life.

This should all be from a recognition that the main part of life is *emunah*. The prophet Chabakuk summed up this generation's *avodah* as entirely *emunah* – as it is written, “*The righteous one shall live by his faith.*” (Makkos 24a). *Emunah* is the beginning – and end – of all life. It is the inner essence of everything, and it is an unlimited power.

## 5.

There are people who serve Hashem, and one day they make an internal self-examination and they discover that they still haven't ingrained *emunah* in their hearts yet. Then they get depressed from this and are in pain from their low spiritual level, falling into terrible hopelessness and despair.

This is not the correct way to react to the problem. If a person realizes that he has weak *emunah*, he

should not fall into despair *chas v'shalom*, but he should instead set aside a short amount of time and talk about his frustrations with Hashem. He should speak to Hashem, as if Hashem is an old friend of his, and he should say:

*"Ribono shel olam*, I know You created me, and that You are keeping me alive every second. I know clearly that You are running the world, and that You do not overlook any detail. I also know that everything that comes upon me is from You, and that nothing else can cause anything to happen to me except You.

*"But Ribono shel olam*, my heart is bitter. I know this all only in my intellectual mind, but in my heart, I do not feel these truths. In my heart, I do not feel strong in my *emunah*; sometimes I have strong *emunah*, and sometimes I don't. For example, sometimes I lose my temper and get angry; if I would really feel that everything is from You as I am about to get angry, then I wouldn't lose my temper and get angry, because how can I *chas v'shalom* be angry at You?! So why do I get angry sometimes when I know that everything is all from You? It is because I only know about You with my intellectual mind, but I don't feel the truth in my heart. My heart is closed up and it doesn't feel clearly the *emunah* that my mind knows about.

*"Ribono shel olam*, I really want to believe in You strongly, but it's hard for me! I'm not succeeding at it. You are my Father! Open my **heart** to believe in You more...."

These are the kind of words a person should speak about with Hashem – each person according to how he's comfortable talking. A person should get used to talking to Hashem like this for weeks and months, and never give up, *chas v'shalom*.

## 6.

If someone wants to see immediate results from this, he's in for a disappointment. Success in this doesn't happen so fast. A person has to be patient in Avodas Hashem – and that includes being stubborn and persistent to continue!

Even if a person *davened* many, many times to reach his goal, he should never give up. It's a test from Hashem, to see if he really trusts in Him that He can answer him. And Hashem wants us to indeed feel confident in Him that He can answer us. If a person has that *bitachon*, he will definitely be answered.

This is tried and tested. There is no person who ever davened to Hashem that his *emunah* be

strengthened who wasn't answered! Anyone who has done this saw a transformation in himself – that he became a more believing person in Hashem.

Our difficulty with this, however, is that Hashem created us with a nature to be anxious, and we like to see immediate results when we begin to work on ourselves. When people don't see results right away, they immediately give up – and this is a recipe for disaster. A person has to be stubborn when it comes to Avodas Hashem; someone who is persistent for years and doesn't slacken off from this will end up gaining tremendously.

## 7.

A person has to make sure he doesn't become down when he see that he is failing with this avodah.

Not only do people feel that their hearts are weak when it comes to *emunah*, but people also run into intellectual difficulties as well with matters of *emunah*.

For example, when tragedies or certain mind-boggling events happen, a person can't comprehend in his mind how such events are really all from Hashem, and his mind can't accept what's going on during these times. Then the person forgets about *emunah* in Hashem, and he forgets the purpose of his life, which is to always be involved with Hashem.

Don't become down at your failures in *emunah* when you encounter such incomprehensible events in your life. Realize instead that this is the way Avodas Hashem is – sometimes we remember *emunah*, and sometimes we forget *emunah*. If we forget *emunah*, as soon as we summon up our *emunah* back again and we remember that everything is from Hashem, now is the time to set aside a small amount of time and speak with Hashem. Say to Him:

*"Ribono shelo olam, You know how much I want to really believe in You, and how much I yearn for You. But Ribono shel olam, You see how many failures I'm having at this. I'm forgetting my belief in You so many times. But I am not giving up from believing in You. If I ever have times when I forget You, chas v'shalom, I will pull myself together and remember that I must have emunah in You, bli neder.*

*"I am begging You, Ribono shel olam, from the depths of my heart, that You take pity on me and ensure that I don't forget You, and that if I do forget, I am asking of You that it shouldn't last for so long, and that You awaken me immediately to remember You."*

This is the way how a person davens to Hashem – and each person should daven to Hashem in a language he’s comfortable with.

## 8.

The way to talk to Hashem is to speak about **everything** that’s on your heart to Hashem. Talk it out to Hashem – all your successes, as well as all your failings! Tell over everything to Him – every last doubtful feeling that’s on your heart. Don’t leave out a single detail about your life – tell Him **everything** that’s bothering you, everything!

But remember to feel confident throughout that Hashem is listening to your every word and that He’s so proud of You at reaching this attainment. He is filled with joy that there is a Jew yearning to strengthen his belief in Him, that there is someone in the world who is begging Him for this and feeling broken inside at this, continuously strengthening himself even after he fails in it.

If any Jew would really feel how much satisfaction he is giving to Hashem as he speaks to Him like this, it would be such a sublime pleasure to him that it would be even more enjoyable than Gan Eden!

## 9.

There are tremendous benefits in davening to Hashem that we should have *emunah*.

First of all, the very fact that a person is talking to Hashem about *emunah* already is very helpful and increases one’s *emunah*. Davening to Hashem about *emunah* is no worse than when we talk about *emunah* – it accomplishes the same effect.

Secondly, when a person davens to Hashem for *emunah*, he awakens in himself a yearning for *emunah*, and that is another factor involved which also increases one’s *emunah*.

Also, by continuously *davening* to Hashem and begging Him to have *emunah*, Hashem surely will answer the *tefillos*, and that will make any person into a firm believer of Hashem, as he sees that Hashem indeed answers his *tefillos*.

## 10.

There is an additional gain with all of this. By davening like this to Hashem, a person gets used to connecting every part of his daily life with Hashem.

For example, a person is learning Gemara, and he doesn't understand something and it bothers him. He can daven to Hashem about and believe that only Hashem can help him understand. After he merits the understanding, his *emunah* is strengthened, because he sees that only Hashem helped him understand.

Throughout the rest of the day as well, a person attaches the day to Hashem, always thinking about how he needs Hashem to help him with anything. He can daven to Hashem about every detail of his life, and make sure that *emunah* precedes everything. The *emunah* then fuels his *tefillah*.

In this way a person is attached to Hashem at all times. Anyone who does this will reach tremendously high spiritual levels.

## **11.**

The matters here only apply to a Jew's soul – we are describing the power of a Jew's soul, which is *emunah*. *Emunah* is the life-force of a Jew. When a Jew understands these matters and practices them, he merits fulfillment and eternal achievements. It is important to review these words here at least twenty times, and to live by them. One has to make sure he never gives up.

The possible achievements that one can reach through practicing this are awesome.

## **12.**

This kind of lifestyle is how a believing Jew lives – every day, every moment, he seeks to ingrain more *emunah* in his heart.

A person goes to the doctor. Before he goes in, he should talk to Hashem and say:

*"Ribono shel olam, I know that only You can heal me, and I am only going to the doctor because You give permission to do so. Yet I know that only You can heal me, and not anyone in the world."*

And as a person is sitting with the doctor, he can talk to Hashem mentally: “*Ribono shel olam*, only You can heal me. This doctor is only Your messenger to heal me.”

You go to the furniture store to go buy a table. Don’t just go to buy the table – go with Hashem to buy the table! Talk to Him throughout and say, “*Ribono shel olam*, I need a table for my house. Show me which table to buy.”

Let’s say you are regretting your purchase. Say to Hashem, “I asked of You to help me buy the right table. Now I’m regretting the purchase and wishing I should’ve gotten a different model. But I know that this feeling is incorrect, because since it was Your will that I buy this table, then these feelings of regret I’m having are going against *emunah*. Please strengthen my *emunah* in You.”

A person should keep talking like this to Hashem until he feels that his negative feelings have been quieted.

Let’s say a person is waiting for the bus to come. The bus comes – and just drives right past him. He should pause and say:

“*Ribono shel olam*, I know that You want this bus to run according to how You want it to. I know that my negative feelings now are incorrect.”

This is the way to live all the time – always speak with Hashem, saying how you know everything depends on Him alone. Say to Hashem that although you know this is your mind, you want to feel it in your heart. Ask Hashem to please help you feel the truth.

The main point of what we are saying should be absorbed. There are countless applications of this point. It doesn’t depend on the situation you’re in. It doesn’t have to be one of the situations we gave. The point is to talk to Hashem about everything throughout the various disappointments of your day. Through practicing this more and more, a person can reach a very high level of *emunah* and attain a strong bond with Hashem.

### 13.

It is only through true *emunah* that we can ever possibly arrive at happiness.



People aren't happy when they feel like they're missing something. But if someone truly lives with *emunah*, there is no such thing as "Something is not good in my life", because he realizes that he isn't really missing a thing. Anything we have – and whatever happens to us – is all from Hashem, to the tee. It's all for our best, and it's all exactly what we each need. It's impossible to be sad when a person knows that he has everything he needs.

Without *emunah*, it appears to a person as if he's missing something he needs. But with *emunah*, a person realizes and feels that he has exactly what he needs – not less, and not more.

(This does not contradict the fact that we have to daven for what we are missing. Even when we daven, we are not supposed to tell Hashem, "I need this", but we are supposed to say, "*Ribono shel olam*, **if** I am indeed missing this in my life and I need it, please give it to me."

We are never supposed to *daven* to Hashem and tell Him that we for sure need something, because we don't know what's good for us. Understand this point very well. The only time we are supposed to *daven* to Hashem that we for sure need something is when we are *davening* to be saved from committing a sin, or when we are *davening* one of the *tefillos* which Chazal established through their *ruach hakodesh*.)

#### 14.

How do we acquire our happiness?

Whenever a person goes through any pain or frustration, he should say to Hashem: "*Ribono shel olam*, who gave me this pain? You, *Ribono shel olam*. Is it good for me or is it bad for me? It's definitely good for me! If You did it, then it is always good, because anything You do is pure good.

"But, *Ribono shel olam*, I can't understand how indeed it's good for me, and I don't feel this way either. I am feeling pain. In my mind, I can tell myself that it's all for the best, because You only do good...but my feelings don't feel that way! My feelings are incorrect. Please help me feel that it is indeed good for me to go through this."

Keep talking to Hashem like this for a long time until you feel how the situation was indeed for your good. Keep talking to Hashem like this until you feel calmed inside.

There are others who need a different approach than *tefillah* to Hashem, and they instead need to just repeat the words: "*Ribono shel olam*, I know that this situation is for my good." Keep saying this until you feel how it's true. (See the Preface).

The point of all of this to absorb just this main point: that in whatever pain or frustration we go through, we should talk to Hashem, and we should start with words of *emunah*: "I know it all from You, Hashem."

This can work either by *davening* to Hashem or by just repeating these words to yourself again and again. Keep *davening* talking like this until you feel calm, believing, and happy inside.

Only in this way can a person ever become truly happy. When we remove our pain and frustrations, we return to our natural state of the soul, which is to be happy. The nature of the soul is to be happy, but when people feel like they're missing something they need, their natural happiness is held back. When we remove those negative feelings - through *emunah*, as we have said - then nothing will hold back the natural happiness of our soul.

## 15.

There are many people who have a hard time being happy, because they are always plagued with negative thoughts such as: "I'm suffering in my life because I'm being punished for my sins." They are bombarded by thoughts of self-guilt and self-contained anger at themselves for making mistakes in life. They bring on their own suffering in this way.

A person who acts like this is making two mistakes.

**1)** Hashem created two possibilities for mankind: either to choose to do the mitzvos and receive reward, or to *chas v'shalom* choose sin and then receive punishment. Now, if the punishment would be something which we can consider to be evil, then this is very troubling: how can it be that Hashem, who is completely good, created evil? It must be that in essence, even a punishment from Hashem is inherently good. It is just that we have the free choice to cling to the wrong decisions. Thus, a punishment by essence is good, and it is just that we are told not to sin, and we are given the choice to choose between a *mitzvah* and a sin. Yet our minds cannot comprehend this; how can it be that a punishment from Hashem is in essence good??

For this, we need *emunah*. We need *emunah* to really believe that everything is good - even a punishment. This is a very deep and subtle point; it is of course prohibited to commit a sin, but if a

person did commit a sin, he has to feel that the suffering which results from it is really good for him!

2) There is another approach to explain this concept: there are two abilities we have, *yediah* (knowledge of the facts) and *bechirah* (free will). *Bechirah* seems to imply that there is such a thing as evil, since we have to “choose” between “good” and “evil.” But there is a higher understanding, called “*yediah*” – to “know” the truth, which is essentially when a person recognizes that there is no such choice, because the truth obligates him to choose good. From the higher perspective, *yediah*, a person is able to see how really everything is good, and thus even a punishment can be good.

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