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## Testimony - 002 In Appreciation of Bilvavi Part One

BH, I had the opportunity to learn full time at Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya in Givat Shaul, Yerushalayim Aug-Oct 2014. It was at the Seminary that I came across a book - for free distribution - "Building a Sanctuary in the Heart". I started reading it, and I've read it over and over again and brought it over to as many people as who will listen.

I noted that inside the book it stated that it is distributed free of charge on condition that each recipient learn the first two sections, and send feedback to the above mentioned address.

Not only did I learn the first two sections, they inspired me to create an "event" utilising Facebook. I now understand my life's purpose - CLOSENESS TO HASHEM - and wanted to do something that would bring me, and PG others closer to Him. So erev Chanukkah I wrote a piece quoting from the book as the basis for the "event", that being encouraging people to sign up to Daven Mincha for 40 days.

Below I share with you that which I wrote, and request that you take this as my "feedback" which was the condition of the free distribution.

Thank you to the author for clearly illustrating my life's purpose. I had been searching for this answer all my life!

Kol tuv,

Elisheva Levinsohn

Johannesburg, South Africa

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### **BUILD A SANCTUARY IN YOUR HEART BY COMMITTING TO DAVEN MINCHA FOR 40 DAYS**

"Why am I here? What is the purpose of my life? The answer is - deveikus (cleaving/closeness) to Hashem." It is written that a sincere person who hears these words of the Ramchal, and truly accepts them in his soul, must write them down on a piece of paper. One should place this piece of paper in their pocket and take it out every 15 minutes to contemplate its contents well. The words should be read again and again until they stand alive before one's eyes and we no longer need to look at the piece of paper. It follows on by saying that a person who does this will live with

a clear inner conviction of the purpose of life and will constantly seek ways to actualise the true objectives of his very existence.

In section 1:40 of the book 'Building a Sanctuary in the Heart', it states:

In this world, a person running a business takes an inventory once a year. He closes the store for a day to take stock of what was sold and what wasn't and assess his progress. A person must do the same with his life. This is not merely a brief self-accounting for 15 minutes, a half hour, or even an hour. He must halt the whole course of his life and ask himself: Do I want to be attached to the Creator, or not? If I do, am I treading on the path that brings me closer to feeling this palpable closeness I seek? Or perhaps my path of learning Torah with the mind only and performing the mitzvot with minimal inspiration will not bring me true closeness to Hashem. One should take as much time as he needs to reach this recognition, but he must emerge with an awareness and a clear will to live his life solely for the sake of closeness to Hashem. Then, his task will be to identify a definite path that will bring him there.

This truly makes what appears as complicated life decisions, easy. Will this choice bring me closer to, or chas v'shalom move me further away from Hashem? If closer, pursue. If further away, abandon at all costs.

Why 40 days of davening Mincha? The Tur Orach Chayim (chapter 232) explains that Minchah is considered very precious by Hashem. One should be scrupulous about reciting Minchah for we find that the prophet Elyahu was only answered when he recited Minchah.

At this time of year most of us are on vacation. We find ourselves with so much time on our hands and are free to pursue our interests without the restrictions of office hours and crazy deadlines. How do we plan on using this time? By us waking up this morning, Hashem has decided that we are worthy of another day. What are we going to do with this day He has lovingly granted us? Are we going to utilise it to serve Him? Or are we G-d forbid going to waste time by doing everything else but fulfil our purpose? It is important to relax, recharge our weary bodies after a long hard year - however - it is even more important to recharge our neshoma. Rushing all year long could also have affected our davening, rushing through the tefillot as we need to get to a meeting, another meeting, email, whats app, sms, messenger, landline ringing, mobile ringing, demanding our attention 24/6.

Vacation (just like Shabbos) is a precious time given to us to CONNECT once again with family, friends, with ourselves. And most importantly, connect with Hashem. We have the time and energy to daven with a full heart, to sit and talk to Hashem. It is an opportunity to release our inner feelings - the joys and depressions, the successes and frustrations. Tell Him the various pressures you are under, your personal situation and that of others in your family, and also of the Jewish people as a whole. Nothing is too trivial to discuss with G-d, as long as you think you need it, pray for it! And because we are relaxed, not only do we ask with kindness, but we are able to tune into and hear what He has to say to us. What a gift!

Vacation is the perfect opportunity for us to take stock.

The thought of being able to commune with Hashem differently to the rest of the year (outside of magnificent much loved Shabbos), is what inspired me to create this "event". The opportunity to get closer to Hashem at a time when there is more personal time, drove me to want to share my "personal event" with you. Whilst I daven daily, it is not always that I make the time to daven Mincha.

Having the power to connect with G-d on a daily or even hourly basis brings tremendous sense of self importance to your life. G-d is waiting to hear from you. But how do you know this? Perseverance. Each time you turn to G-d, you are connecting with Him. As you become more proficient in pouring out your heart, you will feel a certain sense of closeness. Sometimes, though, it doesn't seem to work. You sit listless without emotion. Don't despair! Just persevere. You will see the answers to your prayers.\*

We've all been through a tough year - whether as individuals or as a community. Davening is something that is not only a guaranteed soothing balm but one of the greatest sources of our strength. I've chatted to so many people who have told me that often they just don't feel like davening, and on those days things don't go as well as they'd wanted. On the days they decide to commune with Hashem, they feel better, the day feels easier and their troubles a little lighter.

It doesn't matter whether you're davening Mincha daily already, or whether you're a woman and are not bound by positive time based mitzvot. Let's do this together. The Talmud states: "The prayers of the individual may be rejected, but the prayers of the many are never rejected." (Ta'anit 8a) ... this may be in reference to a Minyan ... but

nevertheless, the unity of the Jewish people is critical. After all, we are a nation of one person, one heart.

Our Sages teach, "A person's prayers are not answered unless he places his very soul into it." Pray as if your life completely depended on it!

Please sign up. 40 days of Minchah (and PG beyond) is one way of fulfilling our life's purpose - getting closer to Hashem. Talmud, Shabbos 127a states that "absorption in prayer" is one of the courses of action which a person not only enjoys the reward in This World, but also in the World to Come.

What a beautiful time to start this "event"... erev Chanukkah. May you and your family feel the neis gadol in your daily lives. Absorb the magnificent light beaming from your chanukiah and take this into your interactions with your fellow man. Through tefillah, you will be a visible light to others, a true light unto the nations.

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