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## Shovavim - 008 Fixing by Simplicity

### ***Bris: Our Temimus With Hashem***

These days, the days of “Shovavim”<sup>[1]</sup>, are days to fix the damage done to one’s “Bris Kodesh” (the “Holy Covenant”). There are many facets to how to rectify the *Bris*; we will say one point, with the help of Hashem, which can apply to all of us.

The concept of a *bris*, a covenant, is when two people form a treaty with each other. They make a *bris* together to ensure that they will be loyal to each other, that they will remain connected with each other in loyalty.

*Bris Kodesh* implies two things. There is an outer layer to it, and an inner layer to it. The outer layer to *Bris Kodesh* is, that one is not allowed to *chas v’shalom* do the physical action of violating the *Bris*.<sup>[2]</sup> The inner aspect of *Bris Kodesh* is to keep the treaty of the *Bris* – to remain loyal to the one whom we made the treaty with.

There is a *bris* between Hashem and the Jewish people. Hashem said to Avraham, “Walk before Me and be wholesome.” This defines the *bris* – that we must remain with our *temimus*, our wholesome loyalty to Hashem.

A baby is given a *bris* (circumcision) when he is just eight days old; he has no *daas* (awareness). This is to show that our *bris* (covenant) with Hashem represents how we must always have **temimus** (earnest, loyal relationship) with Hashem.

The concept of *temimus* is thus to simply go with Hashem’s will, even when we don’t understand things with our *daas*.

### ***Damaging The ‘Bris’: Damaging Our “Temimus”***

What does it mean to “damage the *Bris*”? It is essentially defined as a loss of a person’s *temimus* with Hashem. When one foregoes his *temimus* with Hashem, that is essentially how it leads to damaging his *Bris* with Hashem.

The *Mesillas Yesharim* says that we all have an “avodah *temimah*”, a wholesome service to Hashem which we must perform. What is the meaning of ‘avodah *temimah*? *Temimah* means “perfect”, as we find that a *korbon* (sacrifice) has to be *tamim* (perfect, with no blemishes); but it can also mean like what we find by Yaakov Avinu, that he was an “*ish tam*”, a “wholesome man”. Yaakov epitomized the quality of *temimus* (wholesomeness) by constantly learning in the tents (“*yoishev ohalim*”); he was

always “with” Hashem as he sat and learned in the tents of Torah.

When a person doesn't have *temimus* with Hashem, then he will only be connected to Hashem at certain times. His relationship with Hashem changes and fluctuates, depending on his situation. When his *daas* is working properly, he'll get along with Hashem; but when his *daas* weakens, his relationship with Hashem suffers.

### ***How Temimus Affects Your Torah Learning***

Why indeed was Yaakov Avinu called an “*ish tam*”? If it's because he was learning Torah all day, why does that show that he had *temimus*? After all, a person might be learning Torah all day, but only because he desires *daas* (knowledge), not *temimus* (an earnest relationship with Hashem). So how do we know that Yaakov is an *ish tam*, just because he “sat in the tents” of Torah all day?

The answer is that the reason that he went to go learn Torah in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever for 14 years, in order to prepare for living with his father-in-law, Lavan. That kind of learning showed that he had *temimus*. So **because** he was in *ish tam* in the first place, that was why he was able to be a *yoishev ohalim* and sit and learn Torah.

Thus, we see that having *temimus* (an earnest relationship with Hashem) is the root that enables a person to really learn Torah properly. The quality of our Torah learning is thus affected according to how much *temimus* we have.

By a *bris*, we say, “Just as you entered the *bris*, so will you enter Torah, *chuppah*, and good deeds.” The connection is that if a person makes sure to keep his *bris*, which is to maintain his *temimus* in his relationship with Hashem, he will come to merit Torah. The *temimus* that a person has will have a direct effect on his learning.

Thus, one's *temimus* and one's *bris* are two interrelated matters. When a person loses his *temimus* towards Hashem, he damages his *Bris* with Hashem; and the same is true vice versa – if one damages his *Bris*, it's a reflection that he is missing *temimus* towards Hashem. When a person damages the *Bris Kodesh*, the main part of the damage is that he has lost his loyal connection with Hashem. The only reason why a person wouldn't be careful not to damage his *Bris* with Hashem is because he doesn't care about having *temimus* towards Hashem.

### ***Learning Torah With Temimus, Not Daas***

This is the question one needs to ask himself: When a person is learning Torah, where are his first thoughts coming from? Are they coming from a desire for *daas* [which is to simply ‘know’ more Torah, for purely intellectual reasons, and nothing to do with wanting to connect to HaKadosh Baruch Hu's Torah) or do his thoughts of Torah stem from his *temimus*?

Our initial thoughts, when we learn Torah, are ideally supposed to be stemming from our place of *temimus* in our selves. [We can desire to know the Torah, of course, but the very initial desire for knowledge of Torah is supposed to come from our desire for *temimus*, not for *daas*. Because the Torah is not merely an intellectual pursuit; it is our relationship with Hashem.]

*Klal Yisrael* first said “*Naaseh*” (We will do) before they said “*Nishmah*” (We will hear), because in order to learn the Torah, we first had to accept that we will fulfill the Torah. We had *temimus*, and through that, we were able to accept to the Torah. We do not first try to understand and then do; first, we decide that we will do, and then, we try to understand. So we see from here that our *temimus* has to come before our *daas*.

But when a person would rather just “know” the Torah and he doesn’t first decide that he will accept it, he is really forfeiting his relationship with Hashem through his learning of the Torah! This is called damaging the *Bris*! The person is neglecting his relationship with Hashem through the Torah! He’s only interested in *daas* - he has lost his *temimus*. All he cares for is *daas*, not *temimus*....

### **Getting Back Our Temimus**

The Ramban says that Avraham was punished that his descendants would have to endure the Egyptian exile, because he asked Hashem for a sign that they will inherit the land. We cannot understand Avraham Avinu, of course, but according to his level, there was some breach in his *temimus* with Hashem, and for this he was punished. In other words: when we lose our *temimus*, that is what invites the Egyptian exile. We rectified this sin when we left Egypt and received the Torah, when we said *Naaseh* before *Nishmah* - we got our *temimus* back.

In the weeks of *Shovavim*, it is a time to fix the sin of damaging the *Bris*. There is a superficial layer and inner layer to everything that goes on, and the same is true with *Shovavim*. The superficial layer of *Shovavim* is to carry out the practical ways of improvement that we are advised to do so we can avoid damaging the *Bris*, and some of these practices are brought in *Halacha* as well. Each person has his own respective methods in how to repair the sin, and they are all holy methods.

But the inner point of *Shovavim* is so that we should get back our *temimus* with Hashem.

The depth of the Egyptian exile was that they fell into the 49<sup>th</sup> Gate of Impurity, as the *Ohr HaChaim* writes; had they fallen into the *Shaar HaNun*, the 50<sup>th</sup> Gate of Impurity, they wouldn’t have been able to come out of it. What exactly is the 50<sup>th</sup> Gate of Impurity? Why can’t a person be redeemed from it if he falls into it? The 50<sup>th</sup> Gate of Impurity is when a person totally loses his *temimus* - when he has lost his entire earnest yearning to have a relationship with Hashem. That is the ultimate worst level a person can ever sink to.

By contrast, the 50<sup>th</sup> Gate of Holiness is when a person has complete *temimus*; however, even Moshe Rabbeinu didn’t merit it. Moshe merited the 49<sup>th</sup> level of Understanding, but he wasn’t granted the 50<sup>th</sup> Gate of Understanding. Why not? Because the 50<sup>th</sup> Gate of Understanding has nothing to do with understanding. The first 49 Gates of Understanding are all within the grasp of one’s *daas*, but the 50<sup>th</sup> Gate of Understanding has nothing to do with *daas*, for it is above *daas*. It is all about *emunah*\*temimus*, which is a whole different plane than even the highest understandings of *daas*\human comprehension.

The Torah was only given to us when we said “*Naaseh*” before we said “*Nishmah*” - when we first have *temimus* before anything else.

### **Shemiras HaBris In The 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

There is no generation that has as many difficulties when it comes to keeping the *Bris Kodesh* as in today’s generation.

But, for every difficulty, Hashem creates an equally powerful force that is good which can counter all the evil. The Ramban says that we are already in the 50<sup>th</sup> Gate of Impurity, and that there is no way to get out of it - unless we have the power of Torah, which can take us out of even the lowest levels. The power of Torah can take us out our current exile, which is the 50<sup>th</sup> Gate of Impurity.

We are in the 50<sup>th</sup> Gate of Impurity! This is what our early Rabbis have already written about. But, to counter this, we also have the power now to tap into the 50<sup>th</sup> Gate of Holiness, which has appeared on

the scene now to assist us in our immense struggles. The 50<sup>th</sup> Gate of Holiness is really the power of *temimus*!

We have to first be concerned about *temimus* in the Torah, before we are concerned with “knowing” the Torah - just as Klal Yisrael first said “*Naaseh*” before they said “*Nishmah*”.

We have to return to the way we were when we received the Torah at Har Sinai, our pure state, which was when we had *temimus*. Without returning to our *temimus*, our *Bris* with Hashem will remain damaged.

Today’s generation has it the hardest when it comes to *Bris Kodesh*, because we are living amidst the 50<sup>th</sup> Gate of Impurity, the lowest possible level. The previous generations did not go through what we are going through when it comes to this. It is not only the amount of difficulties that have grown with this; the very kinds of difficulties we go through with this have never been faced before by the previous generations. The only way to uproot this impurity is through accessing our power to have *temimus*.

People are sitting and trying to come up with all kinds of logical solutions of how to solve the problems today we face with guarding the *Bris Kodesh*. But the truth is: we can’t make any logical calculations to solve it! There’s no logic to it. The problems we face today to our holiness defy all logic; we cannot solve them with our human logic at all. It is a problem that cannot be solved through using the power of our *daas*. The only way to solve it is if we use the power that is above *daas*: our *temimus*.

The words here are matters that are rooted in the very roots of Creation.

May Hashem merit us to understand the depth of our difficult test we face; and to understand the depth behind the solution to our difficulties; and that we should merit to come to our perfection on this world.

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[1] The weeks of Parshas Shemos through Parshas Mishpatim; the word “Shovavim” stands for Shemos, V’eira, Bo, Beshalach, Yisro and Mishpatim.

[2] This is referring to the sin of spilling one’s sperm; the severity of this prohibition is brought in *Shulchan Aruch: Even HaEzer, siman 22*.

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