



Rosh HaShanah - 032 Preparing for Rosh Hashana with Questions & Answers

It is written, “Seek Hashem where He is found” [which the Sages expound upon to mean as referring to the Ten Days of Repentance in between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur].

When there is closeness between two people, is it possible that one of them is close to the other, while the other is not close?

Compare this to a tinted window, where you can see through one side of the window, while a person outside the window cannot see into it, because the outsider sees the opaque side of the window.

Hashem is close to us, and He is especially close us during the Ten Days of Hashem, of which it is written, “Seek Hashem where He is found.” He is close to us, but are we close to Him? Just because He is close to us, that does not mean that we are close to Him. In order for us to become close to Him, it is a certain *avodah*.

Returning to the example of the opaque window, if we want to be able to see through both sides of the window, we need to clear away the layer on the window that makes it tinted, so that will become a clear glass. We need to also make our window clear in our relationship with Hashem – we are on the side of the window that is opaque, and we need to remove the opaque layer so that it can become transparent, and to be able to see the closeness we have with Hashem.

These days are called *Yemai Ratzon*, Days of Will. Hashem wants to be close to us, but it is we who have to reveal a *ratzon* for closeness with Him.

How many *retzonos* does Hashem have? There are 613 mitzvos. Does that mean that He has 613 things he wants from us? It’s really all 613 actions that are all about one will He has from us. Compare this to someone making a wedding. He has to order a hall, a caterer, a photographer, new clothes. Is it all a bunch of details? It’s all about one thing alone: the wedding.

How many *retzonos* do we have? Hashem has one desire alone from us. When we get ourselves to want what He wants, we are beginning the correct path. Otherwise, there is only one side to the relationship – Hashem is always close to us, but we won’t feel close to Him.

Does this mean that we should only want to be close to Hashem, and that we shouldn’t want anything else other than this? Does anyone believe this is impossible?

Here is a simple question. If Hashem would come and tell us, “Follow Me into the desert, in a land that is unsowed” - would we agree to follow Hashem into the desert? I’m not talking about when we were enslaved in Egypt and Hashem would come to us and tell us that He’s taking us out. I’m talking about if Hashem would ask us to leave the comfort of our homes and follow Him into the desert.

There are two kinds of exiles. In Egypt, we have exile with mortar and bricks. There is another kind of

exile - when people are enslaved to their money and their materialistic comforts.

Physical labor is one kind of exile on a person. But if a person is tied down too much to a comfortable situation, that is also an exile. He can't leave his comfortable situation to go be with Hashem in the desert. He has various *retzonos* (desires) that he can't part from. How will the *Yom HaDin* help him change...?

On Rosh HaShanah, Hashem renews the world, because Rosh HaShanah was the birth of the world. We can become a new creation each year. Just like there is a new year, so can our soul become new. We can choose for ourselves a new life this year; we can begin again anew. And what does it mean to start a new beginning?

It means that one wants one thing alone.

Let me explain a bit more. The Gemara says that you can acquire something for another person even without the other person's knowledge, because you are benefitting him. Can we take a non-Jew and turn him into a Jew, because it's good to become a Jew? The Gemara says that one cannot take a slave and convert him, because since he is used to being a slave, he is used to living an irresponsible life, so making him a Jew won't be a benefit for him. It's better for him to leave him as a non-Jew and do as he pleases, rather than become a Jew when he's full of desires that he can't part from. But if one owns a child who is a slave, then the master can convert him, because the child hasn't yet gotten used to a hedonistic life, and it will be a benefit for him to become a Jew.

The concept of separating ourselves from desires - do we view that as an obligation, or as something that's beneficial for us?

Here is a simple way of illustrating the concept. Hashem came to Shlomo HaMelech and asked him if he wants wisdom or wealth. What would we choose? We can't have both. Would we choose to know all of Shas and be willing to remain poor - or would we choose to be wealthy, but we won't know Shas?

When we prepare for Rosh HaShanah, it's very simple how we must prepare. "We have only one heart, to our Father in Heaven." We must get to a situation in which our true desire is - to be close to Hashem. A deeper way of understanding this is that our entire will should be for closeness to Hashem and to understand His Torah. Hashem knows what is going on in each person's heart, and He knows if the person really wants this or not, or if he's just saying that he wants it.

This is the *avodah* of the *Y'mei HaRatzon*, and this is how we prepare for Rosh HaShanah.

I'll tell you a story. In Yerushalayim there lives a certain *tzaddik*; it's not important to say who he is. One day an older bachelor came to him and told him he needs his *shidduch*. He asked him if he can do a certain *segulah* to get his *shidduch*. The *tzaddik* told him to say *Tehillim* and to do certain actions, and he told him, "When you do all these things, your level of *ruchniyus* will become higher, and then you merit your *shidduch*."

However, the *bochur* didn't want to do it.

The *tzaddik* asked him, "Why not?"

The *bochur* replied, "Since I believe exactly what you are saying, I am aware that doing these things will make my level of *ruchniyus* become higher, and then I will lose my *taavos* (physical desires)!"

Once the Chofetz HaChaim had a dream in which he became wealthy. The next day, he fasted. When

asked why, he said, “Why did I dream of such a thing? If it’s a real dream that I have, I need to fast I order to nullify the dream. If it’s from something I merely imagined about during the day, it is not either good that I’m even imagining of becoming wealthy.”

Now let’s talk very practically. If we were given one wish on Rosh HaShanah - what would we ask for? This is how we prepare for Rosh HaShanah – if one is very clear about what he wants, that shows what his true level is. A person can fool himself, but no one can fool Hashem. Hashem knows what each person really wants deep down.

In certain *Machzorim* there are *tefillos* in which one can ask Hashem for Ruach HaKodesh, for wealthy, and for holy children. If a person is davening for Ruach HaKodesh, he is probably delusional. If one davens for good children, that’s wonderful. If someone davens for wealth, that really means he wants wealth more than good children!

We are preparing for Rosh HaShanah, each to his own. Sit down and think of what you want to daven for on Rosh HaShanah. What, practically speaking, do we want to daven for on Rosh HaShanah?

This is how you can determine what your true level is. If you really seek closeness with Hashem and His Torah, then your deepest wish on Rosh HaShanah will be to pray for that, and then you are truly preparing for Rosh HaShanah. If not, you need to learn how to nullify your desires and desire the truth.

All other speeches you will hear are just inspiration, and they do not bring a person to having a true and practical avodah.

This shows you what you really desire in life, and it shows you if you really want to be close to Hashem and Torah or not. If a person comes to the conclusion that it’s not his greatest desire, then Rosh HaShanah will merely pass by, and Hashem will be close to the person, but the person himself will not be close to Hashem.

Examine yourself deeply and find out what you really, really want deep down. I hope that all of you merit to find how your deepest desire is really to be close to Hashem and to His Torah, and to **truly want** that.

If you really and truly want to be close to Hashem, you will get there. If you don’t, I hope that you merit to want it.



Q&A With the Rav on Serving Hashem & Learning Torah

[From 20 minutes into the recording (end of the shiur) til the end of the recording]

(Editor’s Note: The following is a Q&A session with the Rav at the end of the shiur “Rosh HaShanah #032 – Retzonos”, in which very fundamental questions were asked to the Rav about how to improve our Avodas Hashem, and how learning Torah comes into the equation. Many practical and important hashkafos were discussed here. The shiur was given to working B’nei Torah.)

Q1: What does Hashem want from us - to be here, or to be in Eretz Yisrael?

A: If I answer you, will you do it...? Eretz Yisrael! Specifically, in Yerushalayim Ir HaKodesh. **(Laughter**

in the audience).

Q2: How do we let go of the things from the past that are holding us back from improving?

A: If you can train yourself not to want those things, it won't be a struggle anymore. "Nothing stands in the way of the will", so why is it that people don't get what they want? It is because they don't really want! If someone really, truly wants something, he will end up getting it. Not that it will be easy. But he will reach his *ratzon*. The reason why people don't achieve their *ratzon* is not because of things that hold them back - it is because they don't have such a strong *ratzon*. There are people who achieve their *ratzon* even though they have the same difficulties and obstacles. Why? Because their *ratzon* is stronger. So it all depends on one's *ratzon*.

Q3: Why can't I be wealthy and also be close to Hashem?

A: You have to not want money; then, you'll be a real billionaire. Rabbeinu HaKadosh was wealthy; did he want the money? (As for Shlomo HaMelech, he was a king, so that's a different story). He accepted whatever Hashem gave him; in his mind, he felt, "If Hashem wants me to be wealthy, fine, if Hashem doesn't, then neither do I want". He was happy with whatever situation Hashem put him in. The entire question is what a person really wants.

Q4: Don't we daven on Shabbos for Rosh Chodesh for wealth?

A: Chazal say, "Who is wealthy? He who is happy with his lot." When we ask for *kavod* (honor) what does that mean? Do we want *kavod*? Isn't *kavod* a bad thing? The *neshamah* itself is called *kavod*. When we are happy, we are disassociated from materialism, and then we can reach our *neshamah*, which is the real *kavod*.

(I want all of you to know that I'm not going to sit in Heaven on Rosh HaShanah and judge any person. We are all passing before Hashem on Rosh Hashanah - that is the truth. When I go away tomorrow, it won't change that. The truth remains the same truth, and one has to face Hashem the entire year, and even more so on Rosh Hashanah).

Q5: If a person sees that he has desires in himself that are not about becoming closer to Hashem, and it's only a few days left to Rosh HaShanah, how do we practically work on nullifying those desires?

A: This is an excellent question. Every day, for three times a day, go against your will. It doesn't have to be big things. Just practice not giving into what you want, for three times a day. For example, if you want to eat a certain food you desire, instead of avoiding it entirely, just hold back from it a little bit. If you want to hear something improper, train yourself for half a minute a day not to listen. These are all small things. Do them each day, for three times a day, and do it for all 365 days of the year. It should be a resolution you make for the entire year, every day of the year. Slowly but surely as you get used to this, you will nullify your *retzonos*.

Q6: How can we know if we are really improving and keeping to our resolutions to better ourselves that we made on Rosh HaShanah - maybe we are just imagining our growth? What is the real way to make our resolutions last for the rest of the year?

A: It is a very good question. Usually, our resolutions do not last for long. This is the reality that happens with most people; we see this in ourselves and in others. The Ramban says (based on the possuk "אם תעירו ואם תתעוררו עד שתחפץ" that *hisorerus* (inspiration) needs to be put into a *cheifetz*, a "lasting desire". How do you make your inspiration last? The Ramchal says (in sefer Derech Eretz Chaim) that there is an easy piece of advice that bears great results: Every day, set aside an hour of

your time and empty out all previous thoughts, and concentrate on the following: "What did the Avos do? What did Dovid HaMelech do?" Do nothing during this time of solitude, and just think about why you came onto the world. If you can't do it for an hour, do it for 30 minutes, and if you can't do 30 minutes, do it for 15 minutes. But it must be a set time in your schedule that you do every day. Don't go to sleep before you have reflected that day (for at least 15 minutes): "For what purpose do I live?" Accept upon yourself that you will do this every day.

If you want this resolution to last, accept upon yourself that if you miss it for a day, you will give 5000 dollars to tzedakah! (If 5000 dollars doesn't make you feel obligated, then it should be 10,000 dollars! Or 100,000 dollars! The penalty you place upon yourself has to be an amount that will bother you if you have to pay it, which will make you feel obligated to keep your resolution. In order for your resolution for this quiet reflection time every day to last, you need to accept yourself a penalty of a high amount of money, which makes you feel obligated to do it. Without accepting upon yourself a penalty, it's unlikely that you'll keep to the resolution, because you'll be tired sometimes and you won't feel like doing it. Therefore you should accept upon yourself to put 10 dollars (for example) in the pushka if you don't do the 15-minute avodah; that will make you feel obligated.

I want you to understand that this is not advice just for you who are here. It is advice that I say to everyone, and those who accepted it upon themselves saw success. Because when you're scared of having to donate a large amount of money, it is an incentive that helps you make sure to fulfill it every day.

Q8: What do we think about during the 15 minutes of quiet reflection time?

A: That's also a good question, but first, make sure you have the prerequisite: If you just have this 15-minutes a day of quiet time, even if you don't think anything, you've already accomplished a lot, because it's a big feat to be able to put a halt to the action of life. Not that it's everything; it's not everything. But you've already done a lot, if you manage to just have 15 minutes a day of time alone to yourself. We are usually bogged down from everyday life and we have no time alone to think, and only when it comes Erev Rosh HaShanah do we make personal reflection. If you have 15 minutes every day to yourself, you will see a change.

As for what to think during this time, think: "For what am I living for?" The more you get used to this, the more you will expand those thoughts. But the very first stage is to have this time alone and think to yourself "For what am I living for?". After realizing why you live, ask yourself, "Am I actually living my everyday life for that purpose? Am I heading towards the goal of life? If not, what can I do to change?" There's a lot to discuss after that, of course, but the basis for success is - and this is not my advice, but the Ramchal's advice - every day, have a set time in which you reflect to yourself. Just like you have three times every day that you daven, so can you have this set time every day to reflect to yourself about the purpose of life. It is a truthful method, and anyone who keeps to it sees success.

Q9: Instead of penalizing ourselves if we don't do the hisbodedus time every day, can we instead use a different method - to reward ourselves for doing it every day?

A: You want me to reward you? (Laughing in the audience). Who will reward you for doing it? You will pay yourself for doing it? I don't understand the question.

Q10: To do something special for ourselves, if we do it.

A: Let me explain. One method of change is to penalize yourself if you don't keep to the resolution, and another method is to be nice to yourself if you keep to it. I am going here with the first approach. Why am I not using the second method? The second method (being nice to yourself) has a drawback,

because on nights that you feel lazy and you want to just go to sleep, you won't feel that motivated to do the 15-minute avodah. But if you penalize yourself for not doing it, you'll be much more motivated to keep to your resolution. Check yourself, though, and see if perhaps the second method would work for you. If you think it will work for you, then you can use that method (and reward yourself for doing the avodah every day), but only if it obligates as much as a penalty would obligate you. If not, it is pointless to try the second method.

Q11: We have many things we want to daven for during Yomim Noraim. Is there any one tefillah that we should use as the basis and focus in our tefillos, for all of Rosh HaShanah, Aseres Yemai Teshuvah and Yom Kippur?

A: Daven to Hashem that you should be able to want only the will of Hashem.

Q12: If a person who works doesn't have much extra time throughout the day, and he only has 1 hour or 2 hours to himself, what should he learn as Yom Tov is approaching - should he devote his extra time to learning about the meaning of the coming Yom Tov [like if it's before Rosh HaShanah, should he learn about matters of Rosh HaShanah?], or should he instead learn Gemara and Halacha? And on a regular day as well, how should one split his learning?

A: Did you ever meet a businessman who never consulted with anyone for advice? Did you ever consult with someone and you only had one hour of your time? In other words – how much extra time do you really have? You for sure have more than 1 hour a day of extra time to yourself.

If you have 5 hours a day to yourself, there is a whole different answer to your question. 3 hours out of the 5 hours should definitely be spent on learning Gemara.

If you have only 1 hour a day to yourself, you need to learn Halacha, otherwise you remain an ignoramus and commit sins. If you have 3 hours a day of time to yourself, it's a different story.

I will give an answer assuming that you have 3 hours a day to yourself. I am not saying that this answer will apply to all people, but I will give an answer assuming that a person has 3 hours a day to himself.

Learning Gemara with *iyun* (in-depth) – is that something you can do?

Q13: It's possible, but the problem is that learning Gemara with iyun will take up too much of the 3 hours a day we have to ourselves.

A: Of what purpose does a person live? Why do we have 24 hours a day? It doesn't "take up your time". Work takes up your time, but learning Torah in-depth doesn't "take up your time". All of our time only exists so that we can use our time to learn Torah in-depth!

With working at a job, the more time you put in, the more money you make. Learning Torah doesn't work like that. Learning Torah is about forming a deep connection in your soul with it.

In order to gain a deep connection with the Torah, it won't happen without learning Torah in-depth. It's not a question of "how much time" to put in. When you love your child, does it have to do with how much time you put into your child? It has nothing to do with your time; it is a deep truth that you feel.

[To illustrate what I mean], I have a sister in America who got married when she was 33, and she gave birth to twins. My father lives in Eretz Yisrael, and he flew in to America for the bris. It's already

4 months since the bris, and he misses the babies so much already; he doesn't have money to pay for a trip to America to come in and see them again. But he misses them so much; he wishes he could see them. Physically, he doesn't see his baby grandchildren, but in his soul, he is deeply connected with them, because he longs to see them.

Q14: Why is Gemara in-depth the deepest kind of connection a person can have with Hashem? I feel closer to Hashem when I learn Mesillas Yesharim!

A: Is learning Mesillas Yesharim a connection with Hashem or with the Torah? (**Hashem**). We must love Hashem, but we must also love His Torah. There is *Ahavas Hashem* (love of Hashem) and *Ahavas HaTorah* (love of the Torah). They are not two separate matters, though; they must become interconnected.

Q15: There are people who don't feel a deep connection with Hashem when they learn Gemara, and they only feel it when they learn sefarim that talk about Avodas Hashem. So what should they do when they have extra time to learn? [Should they learn Gemara, or should they learn about Avodas Hashem?]

A: When Rav Aharon Kotler zt"l first came to America, he had to convince parents to send their children to Yeshivos and learn Torah. They asked him, "What will come from our children? Will they become a Rav, a Rosh Yeshivah, a Dayan?" He told them, "Your child will become someone who learns Torah. That is what will come from him."

We need to change our perspective towards our life. Hashem gave us 24 hours a day so that we can devote our time to Him and to His Torah. There is a curse given to mankind called "parnassah" (having to earn a living), and we need to deal with that curse. But we must know what the essence of life is; we need to breathe what life actually is. Learning Torah is not something that takes up your time. It is your soul itself; it is a very deep connection.

Q16: It's hard for me to open up a Gemara, because it doesn't get me to feel close to Hashem. So how can I practically spend my time on learning Gemara? It is similar to the previous question, that people don't feel a bond with Hashem when they learn Gemara.

A: The sefarim bring a question: Who do you like more, your father or your mother? Hashem and the Torah are like our father and our mother, and to decide which of them we love more is like choosing if we love our father more or our mother more.

If someone feels like he's not enjoying his learning, I will tell you the following story. There were two people I met last week. One person came to me and told me that he had to leave Kolel in order to go to work. He told me, "I had no choice." I said to him, "Maybe it's true that you had no choice and you needed to go to work. But did you at least **cry** on the day you left behind the Gemara?"

I met another person here whom I hadn't seen in about 10 years. I said to him, "Nu, what's with you?" He said to me, "*Baruch Hashem*, I know Shas." As I conversed with him, he mentioned to me that he's thinking about a certain business he is pursuing. I said to him, "If you know Shas, how can it be that you're thinking of going into business?!" He told me, "I learned all my years only for the sake of *kavod* (honor)."

If a person doesn't feel enjoyment in learning, did he ever **cry** about that, that he doesn't have feelings of enjoyment in his learning? The Gemara says that if a student didn't see success after 5 years of learning, it is sign that he's not seeing blessing in his learning. Did you try for 5 years to learn before you decided that you aren't enjoying learning?

Compare this to a person who loses his appetite for food, so he decides not to eat anymore. Should he stop eating just because he doesn't have an appetite...?

Q17: How does one learn with iyun (Gemara in-depth)?

A: What is your past? Did you learn in yeshiva?

Yes, I went through yeshivah.

A: Start from the Gemara, learn the Rishonim and the Acharonim, all the way until the latest Acharonim, and exert your mind in it.

I hope you don't think that I am someone who came down from Heaven to tell you unrealistic things. It is the truth, and it is *l'maaseh* (to be practiced). You just have to decide that this is what life is about, and that is what the entire issue revolves around.

Q19: Many people learn Gemara in-depth but they don't come to feel the closeness with Hashem that are described in these [Bilvavi] sefarim.

A: It is because those people only have Torah in their life, and no Avodas Hashem. Torah without Avodas Hashem doesn't lead to success, and neither does Avodas Hashem without Torah.^[1] We need both – we need both our “father” and our “mother”.

Is there anyone who has an easy time making a living? Well, why should Torah and Avodas Hashem come any easier to you? The Alter of Novhardok once said that if a person would try to establish a Yeshivah as much as when he tries to set up a living, he would be able to build 100 yeshivos. (He himself built many yeshivos.)

Torah and Avodas Hashem doesn't come easy. But life is not easy. We have free will in how we will live our life and how we will use our energies. There is no such thing as anything successful that was easy. If a person uses his energies entirely for *parnassah*, he'll be wiped out by the time he opens up his Gemara. Not just with regards to having time for learning; he has used up all his soul's energies when it comes to work, so he won't be able to learn Torah properly.

But if one changes his perspective and decides that he will mainly channels his energies towards learning, he will be able to exert himself properly in Torah. Man has the power to choose between a life that contains real vitality to it, or to live a “dead” kind of life; it is written, “*I have placed before you life and death, and you shall choose life.*”

Q20: When it comes to making a living, I know how to set up a business and learn how to make it work. But when it comes to learning Torah in-depth, where do I begin? How should I devote my learning Torah time to learning with iyun, when I have very little basic knowledge of Torah and I haven't even gotten to the first step [just reading the Gemara and having a basic, simple understanding of it]?

A: Are you willing to pay someone to help you learn Gemara *b'iyun*?

Q21: Yes, I do have someone who teaches me how to learn iyun, but my chavrusa is way ahead of me; he understands it way better than me, and I see that he is enjoying his learning, but I don't have that enjoyment.

Basically, there are people who are missing hadrachah (guidance) in learning, and they don't feel enjoyment and success in their learning.

A: If you will allow me, I will split up this question into different parts.

When it comes to “knowing how to learn”, generally, if someone didn’t learn in Yeshiva and he wants to know how to learn, he should hire an *avreich* to pay him and be his personal trainer to teach him to how learn.

After doing that, if someone wants to taste enjoyment in his learning, there is one secret he should know: besides for exerting ourselves in Torah, we must cry to Hashem for success. If you cry earnestly to Hashem, you are guaranteed success.

Q22: *If I have 2 hours a day to myself, should part of it be spent learning Gemara, and the other part of it should be spent learning a sefer? Or should part of it be spent taking a walk in hisbodedus and asking Hashem “Please help me”, and the other part of the time should be spent in Gemara, and another part of the time should be spent on learning sefarim?*

A: What is your goal? Where do you want to get to in your life?

Q23: *I don’t even know what my goal is and where I am supposed to get to. But I still yearn to be close to Hashem.*

A: Do you want to be in Gan Eden, or in Gehinnom...? What will you do in Gan Eden? In Gan Eden, there is only Torah learning going on, for 24 hours a day. If you don’t gain an enjoyment in your learning already on This World, what will you do there? There is just 24 hours of learning there; no sleep, no work; what will you do? If a person doesn’t have enjoyment in his learning, for what purpose does he live for...?

Q24: *If I feel more sipuk (fulfillment) when I just read through many pages of Gemara and reviewing them (Bekius), or to learn Mishnayos, or to keep reviewing a certain Masechta - is that also a proper way to get a deep bond with Hashem, just as much as a person who learns b’iyun? After all, there are people who learn Gemara b’iyun and they don’t cover enough ground; they spend half a year on 5 pages of Gemara, and they don’t feel fulfillment from this kind of learning!*

A: Imagine if a person only gets married to a woman so that he can have children; he didn’t want a wife, he just wanted children. The Torah is not just a tool you use to get to Hashem – it is also a goal unto itself. Therefore, one who only learns *bekiyus* (a quick reading of the Gemara, where you can cover more pages of Gemara) won’t be able to gain a connection with the Torah.

A person should learn both *iyun* and *bekiyus*, but not only *bekiyus*. The deep connection with Torah is gained only through learning with *iyun*.

Q25: *We work. We don’t have 3 hours a time to learn Gemara with iyun; we only have an hour before davening, and an hour at night.*

A: Are in you in a jail...?

Q26: *Is it still effective to learn Gemara for 3 hours a day in-depth, even if it’s not 3 hours in a row?*

It’s better to have 3 consecutive hours of learning in-depth, but even if it’s not consecutive, it’s still better than nothing.

Q27: But I don't even have 3 hours at all. I only have one hour before davening and one hour at night, so I don't have the time to get into the Gemara properly.

A: For what purpose is our life for...?

Q28: I am not yet actually on the level of accepting that my life is only about wanting what Hashem wants and to only learn Torah, and not have to any of my own personal retzonos. But I still want to be in such a situation in which I can earn a living yet also be close to Hashem, to do Hashem's will and to learn Torah.

A: When I came here to speak, I didn't dream for one second that anyone here would accept the words here 100% and be willing to totally change over. So what did I come here for and speak? It is because once in your life, you should hear the truth. Also, if you can actualize the words here even 10% (and even that I'm not expecting), then even that would be a big shift towards the right direction.

Q29: I understand that most of one's time to himself should be spend on learning Gemara b'iyun (and the remaining extra time should be spent on Halacha and on learning about Avodas Hashem), but still, even if I know what I have to do and I am actually doing that, I am not yet feeling a connection with Hashem through learning.

A: If you just close your Gemara at the end your learning session and you come back the next day to your Gemara to get back into it again, then I agree with you that you won't find learning Gemara enjoyable. You keep splitting apart your learning, and there is a constant interruption in your learning like this, because when you close your Gemara at the end of your learning, you never think about the Gemara throughout the day, and you never think about what you're learning throughout the course of the day.

Instead, prepare for yourself a question in your learning to think about during the day – for example, throughout the day, contemplate something you learned about in the Gemara – this will give you a taste of enjoyment in your learning.

Experience with this shows that it is a tried and tested solution to give you enjoyment in learning.

There are other methods of advice too which can help you, but the question one must first ask himself, is if he's willing to even start.

Q30: Isn't there such a thing as Yissocher and Zevulun, that Zevulun goes to work so he can support Yissocher's learning? So why can't we be like Zevulun, and our purpose in life is to perhaps work so we can support others' learning? Perhaps that is my tafkid (role) in life?

A: Reichman (the famous wealthy supporter of yeshivos), once asked Rav Shach, "Who has more Olam HaBa, me or you? I uphold the entire world of Torah, while the Rosh Yeshivah teaches the Torah." Rav Shach responded, "I don't know which of us has more Olam HaBa. But one thing I know for sure: I do enjoy This World, because I learn Torah and teach it my whole life, but you don't have realm enjoyment on This World at all."

Once I met a person who works for many hours a day, and I asked him, "Why do you work for so many hours a day?" He told me, "Because I want to be able to have a lot of money to give tzedakah with." I said to him, "Why didn't the Chofetz Chaim think of that too? Why didn't he go to work so he could give tzedakah?"

I'll tell you another story. There was a student of Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro, a great Rosh Yeshivah in Eretz Yisrael. (As a side note, if you want to know how learn *b'iyun*, look at his sefarim, which are called "*Shaarei Shemuos*"). One of his students learned by him in Yeshivas Beer Yaakov, and then he moved to America. He was learning for a few years and then he felt he had to go to work. He called Rav Shapiro and asked him if the Rosh Yeshivah agrees with his decision. Rav Shapiro said to him, "Absolutely not. There is nothing to discuss."

Rav Shapiro is one of the people in the generation who knows how to do the Goral HaGra (a mystical tradition on how to search for an answer to problems by opening up a special kind of Chumash). He only did the Goral HaGra for communal purposes, and he would never use it for private issues of people who came to him. The student asked Rav Shapiro if he could make an exception for him and perform a Goral HaGra for him to let him know if he should continue to sit and learn or instead go to work. Rav Shapiro responded that he only uses the Goral HaGra for communal issues, not for personal issues of an individual.

Rav Shapiro was the fundraiser for the Yeshivah for half of the year (and Rav Wolbe took him over for the other half of the year); when he came to America to collect for his yeshivah, the student came to him and told him, "Now that I'm driving the Rosh Yeshivah around and enabling him to collect money, I should have the status of a community, not an individual."

In the end, Rav Shapiro agreed to make for him a Goral HaGra. He opened up the Chumash and the possuk said, "*For six days you shall work, and on the seventh day, you shall rest.*" It sounded like the Goral was saying that he should go to work. But that's because this person wanted to go work! Chazal say: "In the way a person wants go in, he is led."

If Eliyahu HaNavi comes and tells you that your soul is from the tribe of Zevulun, you can act like a Zevulun [otherwise, you can't assume that your *tafkid* is to be a Zevulun].

Q31: *It's not that I want to go to work; I just want to know, how do I know that my tafkid in life is to be like Yissocher? Maybe my tafkid is to be like a Zevulun.*

A: I don't mean you personally. My answers are not directed at anyone personally; they are general answers which describe a concept. The questions I ask here are also not directed at anyone here personally, and neither are my answers to each person here meant to address anyone on a personal level.

Q32: *The Rov spoke about nullifying our ratzon (will)[2]. But if a person is a Baal Teshuvah and he has changed so much, and he has given up so much already in his life, why must he suppress himself even more and give up his permitted desires?*

A: Just do three things each day against your *ratzon*.

Q33: *But why should we restrain ourselves from giving to small desires, when we've already changed so much already by becoming a Baal Teshuvah? Isn't a Baal Teshuvah clearly doing Hashem's will already? Why should he restrain himself from small permitted desires? Why is it important? Before a person is a Baal Teshuvah, he wasn't doing anything according to Hashem's will; now that he is a Baal Teshuvah, he is clearly doing Hashem's will all the time, so why is it necessary for him to hold back from small retzonos - why is this needed?*

A: When young people eat things that are not healthy, and when people get a bit older, they begin to worry about their health. Why do people become health-conscious? Isn't it permitted to eat those foods...?

Q34: But why is there even an avodah at all to restrain ourselves from permitted desires, if there is nothing forbidden with giving in to permissible desires?

A: Your question is spelled out clearly in sefer *Mesillas Yescharim*: If it's permitted according to the Torah, why is it that *tzaddikim* abstain from permitted desires? And if it is considered bad and forbidden, so then why don't all people avoid it? The answer is that there are things which are forbidden to all people, and there are other things which are forbidden depending on the level one has reached. The more a person is advancing in his spiritual growth and he wants to improve, it is upon him to practice restraint from even permitted desires.

[1] Refer to **Tefillah #050 - How Learning Gemara Bring You Closer To Hashem** and **Tefillah #107 - Balance In Your Avodas Hashem**.

[2] As described in "**Bilvavi**" **Part 4** (Chapters 15-21).

Source: <https://bilvavi.net/english/rosh-hashanah-032-preparing-rosh-hashana-questions-answers>