



Bilvavi Part 8 - Summary of The Inner Avodah

1.

The Root Concept: Elokus - The Godliness Within

In order to summarize all that we have said until now, we must understand what the root of it all was, and after we are clear what the root is, we can see its branches. First we need the source of all the wisdom, and then we can see the wisdom that branches out from it – like it is written, “*And wisdom is found in nothingness.*” Every concept has a root to it, and when we understand the root, the rest of the concept will come to us as a result.

As we mentioned, there are three levels to our existence. The highest is *Elokus* (Godliness), the middle level is *Neshamos* (Souls), and the lowest level is *Olamos* (Worlds). The “I” of a person refers to one’s *neshamah*, and it implies one’s intellect, his *da’as*, and this is synonymous with the term “light of Moshe.” When a person leaves his “I”, he has left the level of *neshamos* and *olamos* and enters into *Elokus*, which is the “light of Moshiach” – the level above the “light of Moshe.”

What we have been describing here up until now is essentially a description of *Elokus* – our G-dly kind of existence which goes above our lower form of existence, *neshamos*. Sometimes our *Elokus* is active and it is just being clothed as a garment by our *neshamah*, and sometimes we can reveal *Elokus* by removing ourselves from the level of *neshamah* (which is when we remove our ego). This is the meaning of the statement, “In the future, the righteous will be called by the Name of Hashem.”^[1]

The depth of this matter is that one is leaving his “I” and entering in its place the *Ein Sof*, the state of *Elokus*; this is the root of all the concepts we have been saying.

2.

Elokus - No Self; Nothing Besides Hashem

If one is at the state of *Neshamos* (our *neshamah*, which is the outer layer of the soul, and not yet our *Elokus* (G-dliness), a person perceives that there are higher and lower levels he can be on; we have said that *Neshamos* is the view of “*hadragah*” (levels). Because he is at the state of “*yoisher*”, “the line”, he sees that he is either ascending or descending on the “line”.

But if one reaches the state of *Elokus*, he arrives at the perspective in which all spiritual attainment is laid out in front of him on one level, and this is called *hishtavus* (equality). He is at the state of *iggulim*, “the circle”; he sees all the points laid out in front of him, like someone who stands in the middle of a circle and sees the entire view all at once. All the points become equal to reach, and there are no “higher” or “lower” levels to be on.

This gives us new meaning to the concept called *mesirus nefesh*, to be self-sacrificing for Hashem. Let us explain.

If one is at the state of *Neshamos*, then he is within his "I", and he is trying to purify his "I", such as by not desiring anything other than attachment with Hashem. He still has some traces of his "I" going on. But if one is at the state of *Elokus*, he is involved with removing his very self; his *mesirus nefesh* means that he is actually willing to give up his very "I" - he is agreeing to forgo his own existence, if Hashem would want that of him.

Elokus is synonymous with the state that existed before Hashem created the world, "*kodmoh l'olam*" - Before Creation. *Neshamos*, though, is the perspective of After Creation. We will explain this more.

"*You exist before the world was created*". This is referring to the state of *Elokus*, when we recognize that our avodah is not to be involved within our "I", but instead to be above our "I" - to feel as if we don't exist. This was the state of Before Creation. We also say "*You exist after the world was created*", and this refers to the state of *Neshamos* - when one is still working within his "I". This is the state of After Creation.

"*You exist before the world was created*", the state of Before Creation, is essentially for a person to enter the state in which he goes above his "I", as if his "I" does not exist at all. As we explained earlier (in chapter 6), this does not mean simply that one does not have an "I" that exists, but rather that one learns how to negate his ego. It is detrimental for a person to totally disregard one's "I" in the simple sense, because if we are saying that we really have no existence of our own, then that would be saying that there is no Avodah of people (since we anyways don't exist), and this is incorrect. What we have described until now, in the previous chapters, is the state of Before Creation which we can access, and it is essentially the meaning of *Ain Od Milvado* - "There is nothing besides for Hashem." *Ain Od Milvado* is not to be taken so literally. If there is nothing besides for Hashem, then who can serve Him?! Even more so, to take *Ain Od Milvado* so literally is a basic denial of reality; the Torah states that there are people and creations.

What we mean with "*Ain Od Milvado*" is that it is a kind of Avodah which people can attain.

In other words, all comprehension which we have is only coming from our human perspective, in the way we understand it and receive the information. But no concept can be taken to be meant so literally. Therefore, even the highest knowledge which we can attain, *Ain Od Milvado*, cannot simply mean that there is literally nothing besides for Hashem, because if it does mean that, then we are saying that there are no creations. (Maybe one can argue that it means that we have to realize that Hashem doesn't need our Avodah. But to say this is incorrect as well, because it would detract from our Avodah if we have that attitude.) The fact that Hashem was here before Creation is rather a description of a way of Avodah, and whatever we understand about it is only limited to our human perception, for we are only at the receiving end of the information.

The sefer *Nefesh HaChaim* states that from Hashem's perspective, nothing is in His way, because he is the Creator who existed before the universe.

We need to understand, however, that our understanding of this concept is very limited. What do we know about Hashem's perspective, if we are only human?! Hashem is endless ("*ein sof*"), and He is above our limited human comprehension; if so, how are we to fathom what His perspective is? "Hashem's perspective" is thus only a borrowed term to help us conceptualize what it is - that it is **our avodah** to live with the concept of "Hashem's perspective". The avodah is **to live a life in which we never think about our "I."**

As long as a person never goes beyond his *neshamah*, he is within the realm of the self, and even if he greatly purifies his "I", in the end of the day he still has a sense of "I", and that itself holds him back from achieving a true connection with Hashem. The "I" acts as a barrier. For this reason, the

Nefesh HaChaim tells us that from Hashem's perspective, there are no creations. It means that there are really no barriers holding any creation back from Hashem, and this is the avodah of us created beings – to connect to the state in which there are no barriers holding us back from attaching and integrating ourselves to Hashem.

It is a concept that we cannot fully understand, for we are only at the receiving end of the information. Whatever we know about "Hashem's perspective" is only to help us know that there is such a concept (and that it is an avodah for us), but we cannot understand it, because Hashem Himself is endless. We can only know about "Hashem's perspective" *from our perspective*, and thus our understanding of this is limited; there is no way for us to understand it from *Hashem's* perspective.

3.

Lower Humility and Higher Humility

The following results from this discussion.

About Moshe Rabbeinu, it is written in the Torah, "*And the man Moshe was more humble than any other man.*" The humility of Moshe Rabbeinu is that he was able to negate his "I". In this kind of humility, a person recognizes that he has an "I", but instead of enlarging his ego, he lessens his ego. Moshe Rabbeinu reached the greatest level of this humility, in that he decreased his sense of "I" more than any other person.

But there is an even deeper kind of humility, and it is the humility which Moshiach will possess. It is to have absolutely no sense of "I" whatsoever.

Let us explain the difference.

The lower definition of humility is when a person works to think about how lowly he is – either because he has sins, or because he has bad *middos* – and on a deeper level, to feel lowly simply because he is a limited human being (as the *Mesillas Yescharim* describes). In this humility, a person reckons with his "I" and still has a sense of self-worth; it is just that he lowers his ego. He is still within the realm of his "I". Moshe Rabbeinu reached the greatest level of this humility – the lower level of humility.

But the humility of Moshiach doesn't even consider the "I." It is absolute humility, in which a person does not think at all about his existence. (However, it is brought in *sefarim hakedoshim* that this level will never be completely attained by anyone until the end of the year 10,000. But each person, to his level, can access this somewhat).

To sum it all up, there is an avodah in which we work *within* our "I", and this is when we work our way upwards towards higher spiritual levels. But there is also an avodah in which we *leave* our "I".

When we work within our "I", our "I" itself is getting in the way of having a complete connection with Hashem. But when we go above our "I", we are in the state of Before Creation, *Ain Od Milvado* in its simplest form. In this state, there is nothing else we connect to other than Hashem, because there is indeed nothing else.

In our holy *sefarim*, we find that the general Avodah of a person is to lower his sense of self and to think into his lowliness as a human being. This represents the lower humility. In this avodah, a person reflects into his deeds so he can improve them, and the like.

But in the avodah of “the light of Moshiach” (described in the sefer), to think about one’s “I” to begin with is already a downfall. The more a person forgets about his “I”, the less one thinks about himself, and the more he will redeem himself.

4.

Redemption of the Soul

One must know that there is only one true “I”: Hashem. The more a person recognizes what we are saying here, the less and less he thinks of himself (and he only thinks about himself when he has to, like how to fulfill the Torah and the mitzvos) and besides for this all he does is immerse himself in learning the G-dly thinking of Torah – such a person has a personal redemption from within himself. This is the secret meaning of the redemption from this 6,000 year period. The true redemption is the redemption of the soul (*geulas hanefesh*), and it is a personal freedom because the person finally doesn’t live for himself anymore. It is when a person finally realizes that “*For I am Who I am, and there is no other G-d with me*” (Devorim 32: 39).

Redemption of the soul – when a person never thinks about himself and doesn’t live for himself – is really the secret implication of the term “*lishmah*” (acting for Hashem’s sake). The *Mesillas Yescharim* (chapter 19) describes this when he writes that even if a person is only serving Hashem to get close to Him and to enjoy this spiritual bliss, it’s still not *lishmah*, because the person is still thinking about himself. A sense of one’s “I” holds back *lishmah*.

The depth of Avodas Hashem is to negate our “I” and to instead reveal the true “I” in its place – “*For I am who I am.*” The avodah of this 6,000 year period, (termed *Neshamos*) is for us to connect to Hashem with our *neshamah*. It is to purify our souls – through divesting ourselves from the body, as well as by purifying the soul itself as we draw our “I” closer and closer to Hashem. But the avodah of “the light of Moshiach” (also known as *Elokus*), is to realize that there is no “I”, and because there is no “I”, there are no barriers that hold us back from completely integrating with Hashem.

5.

Mesirus Nefesh

When we understand these words, we receive a whole new perspective on what it means to be humble, and what it means to have *mesirus nefesh*.

Noach had *mesirus nefesh* when Hashem told him to build the Ark. Avraham Avinu had *mesirus nefesh* by praying for Sodom. Moshe Rabbeinu had *mesirus nefesh* by willing to be erased from existence for the people to be forgiven. The *mesirus nefesh* of Moshiach will be that he won’t even attribute to himself any sense of existence at all. Humility was personified by Moshe, but it will also be personified by Moshiach. The humility and the *mesirus nefesh* which we find by Moshe and Moshiach are different definitions, and they are not the same.

Moshe is personified by the middah of *da’as* (understanding). He merited great comprehension because of his humility. The humility of Moshiach will reveal a whole new depth to the concept of humility, and it will thus also reveal a whole new depth to the meaning of *da’as*.

This is what we mentioned earlier (in chapter 9), that there is a level which is above *da’as* – “*lo yeda*”. In *da’as*, there is a *daas* which separates (*daas hamavdeles*) and a *daas* which unifies information (*daas hamechaberes*). That is all from the view of *yoisher*, “the line”. But the higher view, *iggulim* (“the circle”), shows us how all the points are equal from each other (*hishtavus*), and that there is no need to come and unify, because everything is already unified.

The humility of Moshiach will reveal that there is a Torah above one's "I", a Torah of complete *Elokus*. The Torah of Kabbalah, which is entirely *Elokus*, is thus the secret to the redemption. A Torah which is still within one's "I" is what upholds this 6,000 year period, which is exile. But the Torah of the future will be above the "I", and it is entirely *Elokus*, so there will be no "I" at all involved.

(Although we do find in the works of Kaballah that the "I" is given much attention – that one has to expand his "I" – that is only due to the concept of *hishtalshilus* (lit. "chain", that everything Heavenly gets constricted and downsized more and more until it finally reaches the realm of the physical). But from the actual view of *Elokus*, the "I" is totally out of the picture.

This is actually the secret meaning of the redemption.

6.

***Teshuvah* - Returning to the Source**

We have a mitzvah to do *teshuvah* (repentance). Simply speaking, one has to correct his deeds, his *middos*, and his thoughts. The deeds are the realm of *Asiyah*, the lowest world. The *middos* are the realm of *Yetzirah*. Higher than that is the realm of *Beriah*, which are the thoughts.

The highest world is *Atzilus*, and to do *teshuvah* on the level of *Atzilus*, one has to return his very "I" to its Source. What is that source? It is the state which existed Before Creation. Before Creation, as we said before, was not just a point in time, but something that implies an *avodah* for us to do: to connect ourselves to that state of nothing but Hashem. This is the depth of *teshuvah*.

Now we can see that *mesirus nefesh*, *anavah* (humility) and *teshuvah* are really all one and the same. They are all synonyms for having no "I".

Even more so, the entire Torah consists of names of Hashem. This shows that the entire Torah is all an expression of how to return our "I" to its source – the state of Before Creation.

In the lower *avodah*, (*Neshamos*) where one reckons with his "I", there are various levels of comprehension in the Torah. But in the higher *avodah*, *Elokus*, the entire Torah is all an expression of how to negate one's "I", to return our "I" to the state of "*For I am who I am.*" In the higher *avodah*, there are no differentiations between levels; from this higher perspective, every topic being discussed is essentially about how to remove the "I" and return it to the state of Before Creation.

Of course, there are endless details to this, because the Torah is "*longer than the earth and wider than the sea.*" But there is one fundamental point that holds it all together; when we have that root – the root from which everything else stems out of – then we can understand that we have to look at all of the Torah as one piece. All of the Torah is coming to negate our "I" and integrate it with its Source. We need a clear view to be able to see this in everything, but there is one single fundamental point: we must return our "I" to its Source and integrate with it.

7.

Shabbos

The year 7,000 will begin a period of "a day that is entirely Shabbos." The Shabbos which we know of, amidst this 6,000 year era, is not yet the true Shabbos; it is a concept to rest from labor, but it is only a "mini" World to Come (*me'ein olam haba*). The true Shabbos will only be in the future, which will be "a day that is entirely Shabbos, an eternal rest."

The true Shabbos will be when our self is completely nullified. Our "I" represents *daas*, because just like our *daas* helps us lead the way, so does our "I" dictate to us the way. *Daas* is the core behind this 6,000 year era, each century representing one of the six general *middos* (*chessed, gevurah, tiferes, netzach, hod* and *yesod*). In the future, our knowledge of the facts will be so clear that there will be no more free will; now, when we have free will, our "I" is involved, but in the future when our "I" will no longer be active, and thus there will no longer be free will.

The current era is an era of "movements" (*tenuah*), but in the future, there will be no movements, just *menuchah* (rest); the only movement will be our "I" moving toward its root. The movement toward our root is not really a movement, but a rest; we only perceive it as a movement because since we are in this current 6,000 year era of movement, all we understand is movement.

The depth of this matter is as follows. It seems that we have an "avodah" to return our "I" to the Creator, but to what can we compare this to? To a person who loses a certain item, and he's looking all over for it in his house. After much effort, he finds it right where he began to look for it. Although he has worked so hard to find it, he realizes at the end of the search that it was all for nothing, because the item was there the whole time right in front of his nose.

This reflects our own situation of the world - we are similar to blind people who cannot see anything, until Hashem comes and opens up our eyes. When our eyes will finally get opened up, we will see that all our "movements" on this world did nothing at all.

When one toils to find something, what he finds is not because he toiled to find it. All of a person's exertion is so that a person can learn how to nullify his "I", but when he finally finds that state, he will discover that even this isn't needed. In order to come to this understanding, one needs to first go through a stage of exertion. After a person works hard at nullifying his "I", he enters a reality in which his "I" is integrated completely with Hashem; it is impossible for one to see and feel this reality unless one gets rid of his "I" completely.

8.

The Two Parts To Our Avodah

The avodah of a person is thus two-fold. Firstly, we must understand that there are two views on reality - there is a reality in which we are within our "I", and there is another reality - the place that is above our "I." Secondly, we must take this concept and try to live the entire Torah by it.

9.

The Three Stages Of Creation - Three Aspects of Avodah

It is well-known from the works of Kaballah that at first, Hashem's endless light filled all of existence (in simple words, "*He is One and His Name is One.*"); after this, Hashem created a space to make the universe (called "*chalal*"), and then He created *adam kadmon*, the prototype formation of man in which all of Creation was fashioned out of and modeled after. This shows us that there were three stages. Stage One was Hashem's endless existence, *Ein Sof*, when it filled the entire world. Stage Two was that He created an empty space, "*chalal.*" Stage Three was the formation of *adam kadmon*, the design of man and all creations.

We can understand easily why there had to be a first stage. Hashem is eternal, and since He is the Creator, He had to come before Creation. We can also understand why there had to be a third stage, in which Hashem formed Creation. But why was it necessary to have the middle stage, in which Hashem emptied out a space to make the universe? If anything, it should just be part of the third

stage, because it was a necessary prelude to Creation. But why did the *chalal*-space have to be a stage by itself?

The meaning behind this is because "*chalal*" is really representing an avodah in and of itself. It is an avodah to realize that **everything which we have said here is like the "*chalal*".**

We will explain what we mean.

The stage of Before Creation (to be above our "I") is the perfected state which we can access (total integration with Hashem), and the stage of After Creation (to work within our "I") is our current state, but there is also a middle stage in between. This is represented by the *chalal* – and it is when we nullify our "I" and negate our existence.

However, this is begging for a question. If a person does not have an existence of his own, then who is here to serve Hashem?! The answer to this is the concept of *chalal*: we are able to access a state in which there are no Creations, and there is just an "empty space". In other words, we can access a state in which there is no sense of "I", a state of nothingness.

Thus, there are really two realities going on at once: *adam kadmon*, in which a person works with his "I"; this is the lower form of our existence, termed "*Neshamos*." The higher form of existence, *Elokus*, is essentially *chalal* – when a person negates his "I."

Now we can see that *yoisher\hadragah* is the same concept as *adam kadmon\neshamos*, while *iggulim\hishtavus* is the same concept as *chalal\elokus*.

10.

The Fiftieth Gate

The Redemption is the secret meaning of what is called "Fiftieth Gate" (*Sha'ar HaNun*). If a person sinks to the Fiftieth Gate of Impurity, it is brought in the holy *sefarim* that he is beyond *teshuvah*. Yet, it is precisely when the Jewish people sink so low that they will finally be redeemed. This is not a coincidence. It is precisely in the lowest impurity that a person can reveal that Hashem is really everywhere, even where it seems He cannot be found. Since we are all integrated with Hashem at our root, the fiftieth gate actually reveals that there is no need for *teshuvah* – that to be "beyond" *teshuvah* doesn't mean we are hopeless, but rather the opposite: because we are integrated with Hashem, it's as if we don't need *teshuvah*.

This sefer has come to explain the avodah of *chalal*, which is essentially the concept of nullifying our "I." Through "denying" our "I", we use the Fiftieth Gate of Holiness to rectify its evil counterpart, the Fiftieth Gate of Impurity, which is for a person to deny Hashem.

The light of Moshiach is thus essentially for us to use the Fiftieth Gate of Holiness; it is all one point, and because it is only one single point, it is impossible for us to grasp onto, just like you can't hold onto a dot. We cannot *understand* it, since we cannot grasp onto it. It is like the *chalal* – an empty space, which cannot be grasped.

The evil usage of *chalal* is for a person to deny basic tenets of faith, but the holy usage of *chalal* is for a person to go above his "I", to go above *adam kadmon*.

11.

We Need Both Kinds of Existence

The root of all we have said in this sefer are these two concepts: *chalal* and *adam kadmon*. When we understand that this is the root, we must also understand that these two concepts encompass all of life. It is incorrect to say that only *chalal* (nullifying the “I”) is the right path to take and not *adam kadmon* (working within our “I”), nor is it correct to only validate *adam kadmon* as opposed to *chalal*. Both concepts were given to us in our chain of tradition from our holy ancestors, and they are two facets to our Avodah; they are both correct and needed. We must keep all of the mitzvos, which reflects *adam kadmon* (recognizing our existence) yet at the same time we must also access *chalal*, to erase our sense of self.

Hashem is truly a “*mafli laasos*” – He created us as a wonder, that we have two opposing forces in us. One part of us is our “I”, which encompasses all our wisdom; it is called the *Chayah* of our soul. “*Wisdom sustains its owner*” – wisdom is our life-giving force, the *Chayah* of our soul. That is one part of who we are – our *Chayah*, our sense of self, our wisdom.

The other part in us is a state in which we can go above our “I”, which is called the *Yechidah* of our soul – and it is essentially the “light of Moshiach” which has been described in this sefer.

We exist on both planes.

The details of this discussion are too vast and beyond this work, but the root concepts have been said. We need pure eyes in order to see the rest of what this entails, to understand all the resulting details from this, to see how the root of these concepts shines onto everything – and to receive an inner clarity of how to serve our Creator and merit that we integrate completely with Him.

[\[1\]](#) *Bava Basra 75b*

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