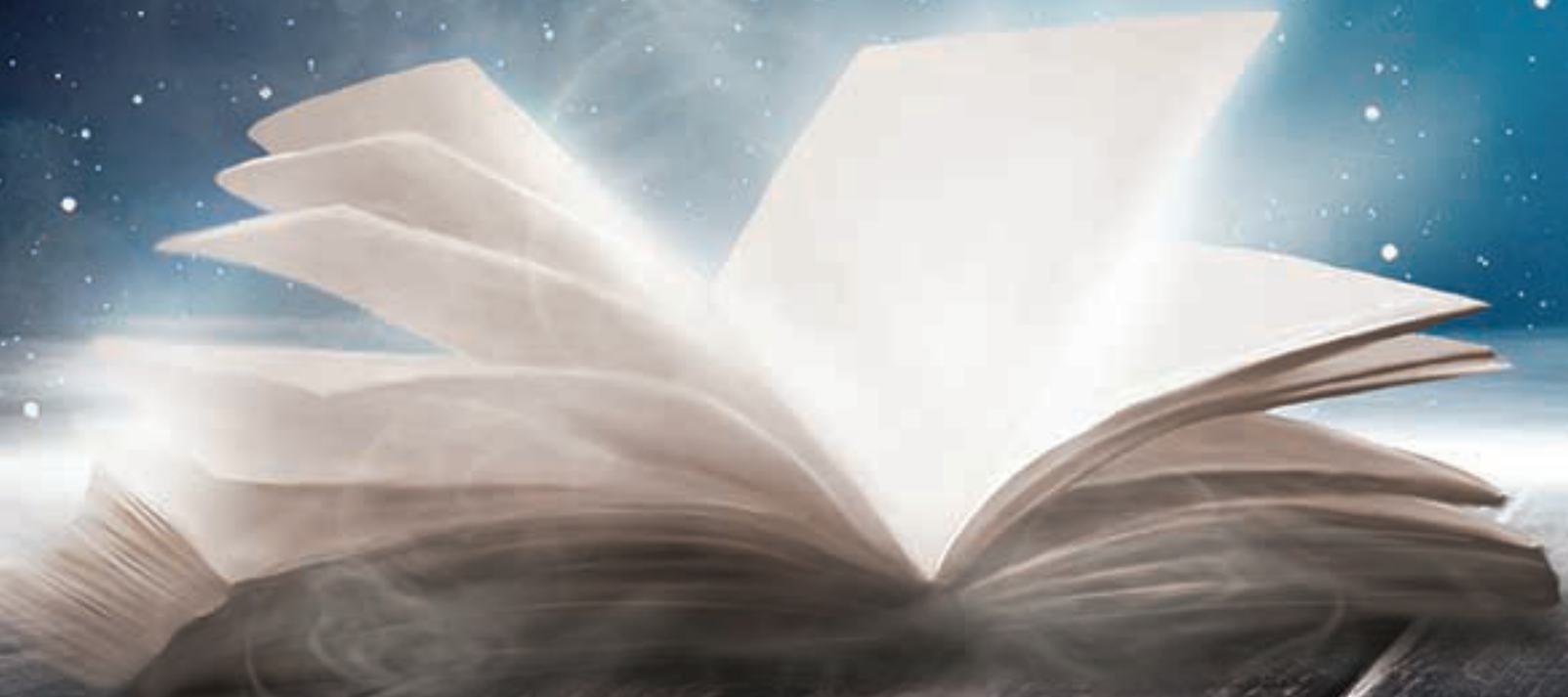


BILVAVI

MY HEART ASKS



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
Parshas Shoftim 5781

Staying Calm In Our Times

QUESTION

The Rav said that we should live now with emunah peshutah and with temimus that Hashem will guide us through these uncertain times. But how can we be calm and relaxed like this, if the Rav has been saying that the tumah in the world today is destroying everything and that not everyone will be worthy of the Geulah, chas v'shalom if they don't do teshuvah, etc.? How are we supposed to feel safe in Hashem's hands when chas v'shalom there can be so many frightening outcomes of what might happen as we get further and further into the final days?

ANSWER

On one hand, live in the simple state of Ain Od Milvado, that there is nothing besides for Hashem, as literally as that sounds, which is discussed in Nefesh HaChaim, Shaar III. In that way, you are not really living on this world, and this is the heightened spiritual mode which you can rise to, called ratzu (advancing, and also called Yichuda ILL-uh, the higher level of revealing Hashem's oneness). After you are able to live with those thoughts, return to your normal level, which is called shov (returning), which is also called yichuda Tot-uh, the lower level of revealing Hashem's oneness upon the world, with the newfound awareness that no one is in control other than Hashem. Be happy every moment and every day, feeling joy and calmness, and thanking Hashem for all of the good that He gives us, meaning that you should connect yourself to what you have and to all of the good you have. Every so often, when there is a necessity, return from Ain Od Milvado (or Yichuda ILL-uh) back down to the level of yichuda Tot-uh, living your day-to-day life with the newly acquired awareness that there is nothing in control except for Hashem and that everything He is doing is good. And keep alternating between the states of ratzu/Ain Od Milvado/Yichua ILL-uh and shov/Yichuda Tot-uh, back and forth, in a cycle.

De-Stressing Before Learning Torah

QUESTION

For many years, when I am learning Torah, I feel physically stressed and I become very nervous, to the point that it is hard for me to focus, and I get physical aches in my body, and I feel emotionally stressed as well. Through the kindness of Hashem, I continued to persevere like this [and learn Torah in spite of these issues]. Many times I wanted to give up, but I always had an inner drive and a need to learn Hashem's Torah, out of a deep recognition that without learning Torah, there is no purpose to life. I persevered, but eventually I became physically not well. Through the kindnesses of Hashem, I no longer feel physical and emotional stress, but many times when I learn Gemara, even at the very start of learning, I already feel exhausted, and many times I even fall asleep. What is the reason for this, and what can I do so that I shouldn't feel exhausted like this? How can I overcome the feelings of exhaustion when I learn Gemara?

Much thanks to the Rav. The Rav's words of Torah have given me much encouragement and a new perspective throughout the years.

ANSWER

Before beginning your learning, calm your soul first, either by tasting a light treat which is tasty and refreshing, or by calming your soul more directly, or by singing a tune that you find calming, or by looking at a scenic view – whatever works for you.

After that, think about what you are going to do, and why you are about to do it, and of the great spiritual benefits it has. Keep thinking about this until you feel joyous about it and you feel a true will to learn Torah, from amidst a calmed soul. From amidst this calm and relaxed state, and from amidst a love and a joy that you have the opportunity to learn Torah, begin to learn, joyously and calmly. Every so often, tell yourself that you are praiseworthy and that your portion is praiseworthy, for you have the zechus (merit) to learn Torah. That is how you should always begin your learning – from a calmed soul, coupled with joy.

This is, understandably, besides for clarifying what your personal area in Torah learning is – which part of Torah you should mainly be learning –and the appropriate style of learning for you, and how much, etc.

Difficulty With Physical Exertion

QUESTION

A person is obligated to do hishtadlus (practical effort) in order to get what he wants and needs. If a person doesn't do that hishtadlus – not because he's relying on miracles, but either because (1) he has inner fears and anxieties which make him feel “scattered” in his soul, or because (2) he is strong both intellectually and emotionally, but he feels very disconnected and unpleasant when he needs to involve himself physically in the material world, which requires physical action –

Is Hashem angry with such a person, and will He withhold blessing from such a person? Is there an alternative way for a person to receive blessing from Hashem?

ANSWER

Hashem loves you, always, and He desires all the time to do good with you. You need to exert yourself just a little beyond your nature – just a little bit and no more – and that is how you will become more connected with Hashem, and then He will give you all your needs.

Besides for this, it would be proper for you to clarify your personality and attain a balance in your soul. This will provide you with a proper connection to your true self, and it will give you much fulfillment, pleasure and joy, and it will bring you towards fulfilling your specific mission and purpose.

Think a lot about how Hashem loves you, and that you love Him as well, deep down in your soul. Through this, you will gradually become more focused and you will leave the “scattering” in your soul, and instead, you will become immersed in “Hashem's world”, amidst your love for Him.

It is certainly possible to receive blessing through the various segulos (spiritual charms) which our Sages have written about, but you should not make this into the most important thing. The main thing is for you to daven, from the depths of your heart, in simple words, to ask Hashem anything you want, like a child asking his father.

Mesirus Nefesh On A Practical Level

QUESTION

In the Rav's derashah "The Avodah of Our Generation", the Rav writes that the way to overcome the "50th Gate of Defilement" in our generation is only through mesirus nefesh [self-sacrifice]. However, in other derashos, I have heard the Rav say that there are always different paths to traverse: to go step after step, and the path of mesirus nefesh. But according to what the Rav has said in the derashah of "The Avodah of Our Generation", it seems that there is only one path to take – mesirus nefesh.

I would be happy if the Rav can clarify what this means for me, practically. Let's say we have a person who has difficulty with learning Torah, and he likes to sleep a lot. Does such a person need to give up his entire being, in one moment, in order to serve Hashem [by overcoming his difficulty in learning and his desire to sleep]? How can he do this, if he's not on that level?! So what does the Rav mean by the words "mesirus nefesh"?

ANSWER

Throughout all of the generations, there were always two paths: 1) Hadragah, to progress step after step. 2) Mesirus nefesh, self-sacrifice, as Rabbi Eliezer ben Dordaya did [see Talmud Bavli, Avodah Zarah 17a].

In our generation, where the "50th Gate of Defilement" is in full force, the only way to counter it is through mesirus nefesh. Therefore, each person needs to exercise mesirus nefesh on [at least] one area of his life. However this does not mean that a person needs to do all of his actions with mesirus nefesh. It just means that a person needs to have some connection to the level of mesirus nefesh. It is possible for one to

implement this idea by taking the area of his life in which he finds his greatest struggle in, and to have mesirus nefesh in that area.

Practically speaking, though, this is unfeasible for most people, so it is not close within reach of most people. So instead, one can try to find other areas in his life [where he struggles in] – each person on his own level and according to his own unique situation – and to exercise mesirus nefesh in those areas [in which he struggles in]. In that way, one can become connected to mesirus nefesh, and thereafter, one has a connection to the “50th Gate of Holiness”, and he is no longer held captive by the “50th Gate of Defilement”. Once a person accesses this spiritual illumination, it will be shined onto all other areas of one’s avodah.

Uncovering Your Personal Share In Torah

QUESTION

The Rav has said that the main kind of Torah learning is to learn in order to know how to fulfill all of the mitzvos, and that besides for this, one also needs to learn certain parts of Torah which are aligned with his personal soul root (shoresh haneshamah). The Rav has said that we see this from the fact that there were some Gedolim did not learn Kaballah (the mystical secrets of the Torah) [for this part of Torah was not needed according to their personal shoresh haneshamah]. The Rav referred me to the words of the Shulchan Aruch HaRav in Hilchos Talmud Torah (1:4) who writes, “The Sages of truth said that every soul, in order to reach its tikkun (repair), needs to study the PaRDeS (the four parts of Torah, which includes Pshat [surface understanding], Remez [hints, gematria, etc.], Drush [homiletics, agadta, etc.] and Sod [the mystical parts of Torah, the Kaballah, etc.] according to one’s capability of comprehension. One needs to know all of it, and this is the complete tikkun (repair) for the soul.” From those words it is apparent that each person needs to study all of the PaRDeS, and it is just that he is only required to do so according to his level of comprehension – and it seems that vice versa, if a person is not able to know and comprehend all of PaRDeS, then he is not obligated to know all of PaRDeS.

But how can a person know what the capabilities of his soul are, when it comes to learning all of the parts of Torah? How can a person know how much he can or cannot understand in the Torah? If one spends time learning a certain part of Torah in favor of other parts, maybe this is stemming from laziness, even if he's exerting himself to understand what he's trying to understand. After having this question I later came across a statement in the name of the kaballists that the colleagues of Rabbi Akiva rebuked Rabbi Akiva for learning matters of agadta and told him that he should instead learn the laws of negaim and ohalos, and this was because they looked into the soul of Rabbi Akiva and saw that his main share in Torah was in halachah [specifically, of negaim and ohalos] as opposed to agadta. The kaballists then cite the words of the Arizal that each person needs to learn the areas of Torah that are according to his personal soul root. This is brought in sefer Shaalos U'Teshuvos Rav Pealim: Yoreh Deah 1:56). It seems from this that even Rabbi Akiva didn't know his personal root and what his personal share in Torah should be, until they told him.

So, the question is: Nowadays, who can tell a person what kind of neshamah (soul) he has?

ANSWER

The very pnimiyus (inner essence) of our neshamah is at first hidden from a person, due to internal "bribery" – various self-serving interests (retzonos). When one nullifies these retzonos, he reaches hishtavus (equality), and then he can know what his personal share is, in which area of Torah learning he should be spending his exertion on.

The Baal Shem Tov and Rebbi Nachman - Simplicity and Complexity

QUESTION

What did R' Nachman of Bresslov introduce in Chassidus which the Baal Shem Tov hadn't yet revealed?

ANSWER

The Baal Shem Tov merited all his levels through mikveh, as he testified on himself. This was the holy element of water, a flowing wellspring, a flow of p'shitas (simplicity) that came from the holy element of water which personified his way of avodah. This resulted in Torah teachings in which the light of p'shitas shines.

R' Nachman, however, was a flowing fire. He merited his high levels because of the great exertion he put in. His Torah teachings are complex and wondrous. He combined together the paths of Torah and tefillah, which are called "My sword and my bow", the tools that prepare one for war against the evil inclination.

Can Your Soul Change

QUESTION

Can a person's nature (and 4 elements) change as he goes through different lifetimes, or does one's current lifetime reflect the nature that he had in his previous lifetimes?

ANSWER

No. But sometimes a person can get a spark (nitzotz) of another's soul, or he can get "impregnated" with another soul (ibbur) [i.e. gaining the soul of a tzaddik]. He can become fused together with aspects of another's soul (either through nitzotz/spark or ibbur/impregnating), creating a whole new dimension to his personality, that is, to the 4 elements of his soul that comprise his nature. However, one's physical elements of

the body can change, and the animal soul (nefesh habehaimis) as well can change, because the animal soul is called the partner with the body.

The Path of Teimanim - Yemenites

QUESTION

I've seen the Rav's response that the great tree of soul roots [discussed in Arizal and Ramchal] contains the three lines, the right, left and middle lines, and that the path of mussar corresponds to the left line, the path of chassidus corresponds to the right line, and the Sephardic path corresponds to the middle line. What about the Teimanim (Yemenites), where are they found on the tree of soul roots?

ANSWER

The path of Teimanim (Yemenite Jewry) is to integrate temimus (earnestness) with sharp, logical thinking abilities. This is the "middle line", the integration. That is why, when it comes to many different areas, they are lot closer to the source of matter.

Advice For Joy

QUESTION

My main element is earth and therefore I am drawn towards sadness, and the most difficult middah which gets in the way of my avodas Hashem is, my pull towards sadness. Can the Rav give me any practical advice on how I can quickly enter into a state of joy (simchah) and get rid of my bad moods (especially when I need to be in a basic positive state in order to daven or learn Torah)?

And are there any specific pesukim in Tehillim I can say, to become more b'simchah?

ANSWER

1) Move quickly. 2) Eat a light diet. 3) Get excitement from something holy. 4) You can verbalize any of the following pesukim in Tehillim:

9:3,	48:12,	97:11,
12:2,	53:7,	97:12,
14:7,	53:10,	100:2,
16:9,	58:11,	104:15,
16:11,	63:12,	104:31,
19:9,	64:11,	104:34,
21:2,	66:6,	105:38,
21:7,	67:5,	106:5,
30:12,	68:4,	107:30,
31:8,	69:33,	107:42,
32:11,	70:5,	109:28,
33:21,	85:7,	113:9,
34:3,	86:4,	118:24,
35:26,	90:12,	119:74,
35:27,	90:15,	124:1,
40:17,	92:5,	126:3,
45:9,	93:11,	137:3,
45:16,	97:1,	137:6,
46:5,	97:8,	149:2.

Changing Our Thinking Patterns

QUESTION

1) Would it be accurate to say that our machshavas (thoughts) and feelings come hand in hand with the life force from Hashem, perhaps as the “catcher” of the life force He sends that is then intended to show us what we are to rectify? That is, the goal is to extract the life force from the initial experience of thought and feeling that is concealing how Hashem is doing everything and tempting us to go by our survival instincts with our own counsel?

ANSWER

Yes! In an average person, the “initial thought” is like the shell that comes before the fruit, the kelipah kodemes l’pri, and this initial thought enters the person to show the person how he needs to sort out the evil in his thoughts. Whereas if a person has undergone much self-purification, his initial thought is a semblance of ruach hakodesh, which comes from the deeper intellect in the neshamah that can be beamed into one’s normal intellect, showing him how needs to think and act.

QUESTION

2) Would it be too simplistic to say that once we come to see how our particular set of thoughts and feelings are the kelipah, and we have strengthened our emunah that Hashem is doing everything, we are intended then to reflect the life force directly into Torah, chesed, mitzvahs and prayer so that the vitality we would otherwise invest in acting upon what we think, feel and do attaches instead to Torah avoda chesed and mitzvahs and we follow that good inclination?

ANSWER

Yes.

QUESTION

3) When we do the above with regards to overcoming lusts, urges, pleasures and other natural inclinations, thereby quieting the body from going with the natural will in favor of Torah, avoda, chesed and mitzvahs, is that called holiness (kedushah)?

ANSWER

Evil serves good, and that is how evil reaches its own tikkun (repair), and this is the spark of holiness that lays inside every evil.

QUESTION

4) How do we answer those who say we are “hurting ourselves” by not “standing up” for our feelings?

ANSWER

Because we should “stand up to our feelings” only if those feelings are pure and proper [not if our feelings aren’t aligned with Hashem’s will].

QUESTION

5) Has our generation acclimated to the kelipas (to the evil forces) and developed tactics for dealing with each other just within the kelipas without consideration for breaking out (hence all the fighting and assertiveness)?

ANSWER

That is true on a partial level.

QUESTION

6) And if so, is the breakdown of all the worldly systems supposed to wake us up to this?

ANSWER

Yes.

QUESTION

7) How can we bring ourselves to see that our power, intellect and systems are not us and that it is time to “break out” of the kelipas if we have never even heard of an inner world or any of the tools of hisbodedus, nullification, and emunah due to curricula in the school systems? How can people find a way to learn what they never heard of if they don’t want to deviate from what they have been taught?

ANSWER

What is needed is 1) To train our thoughts to think deeper, as well as (2) To awaken our feelings to search for more truth.

The Power of Jewish Children

QUESTION

Why do Chazal say that entire world stands on the merit of the Torah learning of children? Children don’t have daas and they are exempt from mitzvos, so what special joy does Hashem have from the Torah learning of children?

ANSWER

The Gemara (Shabbos 119b) says, “Do not touch my anointed ones” – This refers to the children of the Jewish people.” They are called “anointed ones”, Mashiach, from the word masiach, to converse casually. Children converse in Torah casually and earnestly, resembling a “wholesome man who sits in the tents”, the quality of temimus, wholeness.

Chazal also said that “The world stands on the vane chatter of Jewish children.” Rav Papa said to Abaye, “And what about our Torah learning?” Abaye replied, “Chatter

that has sin in it does not compare to chatter that has no sin in it.” Thus, the quality of children is that their chatter has no sin in it. R’ Aharon Kotler (Mishnas Rabbi Aharon III, 104) says that although in the mitzvah of Torah learning children are inferior to adults, they are superior in the aspect of keeping up the world with their Torah learning. See also Zohar (Bo 39a) and Zohar (Vayikra 17b) that children hold up the world give might to the Jewish people in exile. The Tikkunei HaZohar (21a) says that because of the children, there is Shechinah in the Jewish people. Especially in the era preceding Mashiach, the main spiritual illuminations are due to the children, who, as mentioned before, are called “Mashiach”, my anointed ones. The Zohar Chodosh (Beraishis 13a) says that the generation before Mashiach will survive due to the chatter of children, and it is through children that harsh decrees are nullified. It is brought in Shelah, Torah Ohr, 100. However, the Netziv (Heemek Dovor Tetzaveh 28:41) says that the anointed ones, the children, have exalted souls. This seems to imply that their quality is not because of their speech, but because of what they are. Sod Yesharim I says that even the actions of a child are greater than the actions of an adult. The angel who teaches children is Metatron, the chief angel.

The root of children of the Jewish people is in the Torah, in the Aron, in the Keruvim who had the faces of children. The Keruvim, who had the faces of children, were above the Aron, hence the children of the Jewish people are on a level above the Luchos that were placed in the Aron, and that is why the world stands on Jewish children. Understand this very well.

Suffering From Perfectionism In Kiruv & In Learning

QUESTION

I love to help others and I think about others all the time. I especially want to do kiruv. I can't be calm and serene as I am learning and getting closer to Hashem that there are Jews out there who are so far from Hashem and who haven't tasted truth. I have started to become involved in a kiruv organization and I saw many results Baruch

Hashem from my work with others. But I keep thinking about the children who don't have religious education. Although we have succeeded in getting children a religious education in Torah schools, I do not feel that we are succeeding, because there are still more children and young boys who are still irreligious and eats my heart out. And then I hear crazy stories of how irreligious Jews are getting trapped into intermarriage, and I think about it so much that I become depressed from it and it affects the way I am at home with my family. Do I need to stop being involved in kiruv until I have stabilized my emotions more? Or should I give no rest on kiruv because there are souls who are going lost? And if I should continue, how can I deal with my strong emotions that make me so depressed?

Also, I want to know all of Shas and all of Shulchan Aruch. I also want to be a shochet and a mohel, someone who fears Hashem, and I want to know a lot about the soul, and to know Kaballah. I want to be perfect at everything. When I learn any sugya of Gemara I want to understand the entire matter of what I am learning about, not just the words in front of me, because there are at least 19 halachos that hinge on the matter being learned about in the sugya and I feel that I must know them in order to know what I am learning. This takes me a lot of time and then I can't focus. Then I can't find myself in learning and I lose my drive. I also feel like I haven't really gotten anywhere in all of my learning until now, and I haven't become totally clear in all that I learned, I just have notes that are incomplete. When I begin to learn a new topic I try to write a sefer on the topic, and when I learn I need to know the entire encompassing view of the matter, all the 4 parts of Torah (simple and hidden meanings) of what I am learning, which are all of equal interest to me. There is no end to how much I want to know all of the Torah and I can't see myself being otherwise. But how can I do this all properly?

ANSWER

This is a subtle matter. There is a Creator Who can do anything, and there is the human being, who is limited. There is also a spark of the Creator within the created being, and therefore there is a spark in a person which wants to "do everything". This is also called our desire to go higher, ratzu, advancing. But we also have our 'default'

mode, shov, returning to our normal level. A person has to recognize that he is a created being, which is limited by very definition. This is the depth of the power of humility: Recognizing that we are limited, and that we are not limitless and infinite. After your mind comes to peace with this, you then need to deeply clarify that you as a human being are not responsible for bringing the world to its purpose. You are not responsible for results. You only have the responsibility of doing what you can, according to what Hashem wants from you. The results are not your responsibility. This perspective which help you do what Hashem wants you to do, as opposed to looking for results that are perfect. Even more so, one has to know his capabilities, how much he can do and the quality of what he can or can't do, and then he should determine how much he needs to do, and what kind of work he can do, and how he can progress according to his unique capabilities and to do what he is meant to do (besides for clarifying what the halachah entails of him).

When it comes to learning, one should try to understand what he is learning according to his capabilities, but with the understanding that the Torah is longer than the land and wider than all of the seas, and it is impossible to get to the end of the Torah, whether in quantity or in quality, for the Torah is so vastly deep that no one can get to all of its depth. One should clarify each thing he learns about according to his level, to know what he is clear about and what he is not clear about. The very recognition that we are learning an endless wisdom is already a way to gain the humility of Moshe, and changes one's perspective about learning, so that he has the proper perspective. It is about learning one's personal share in the Torah – “And give us our portion in Your Torah.”

How To Reach Heart-Recognition of Hashem

QUESTION

I understand from the Rav's approach that emunah must be coming from our heart, that we must be able to feel our awareness of Hashem, as opposed to merely knowing of Him in our intellect, because we cannot base our emunah in Hashem on our

intellect, since our intellect is limited and we can become mistaken through it. So how indeed do we reach emunah of the heart? I don't mean to ask about how to internalize our intellectual emunah into our heart, rather I mean to ask: How do we start directly with emunah in our heart?

ANSWER

The depth of our soul's power to have emunah is from the same place in you where you recognize your own existence, the truth of your havayah. It is from your own havayah that you can recognize the absolute havayah, which is the truth of His infinite existence. For a Jew is an actual "portion of G-d from above". Understand that well. When a person penetrates into the depth of the truth of his soul, after he has purified the soul's outer layers, he then reaches his very havayah, and then he can recognize the absolute havayah, the truth of the Infinite. This is the root way of recognizing our Creator, by recognizing our own existence and from that very same place of self-recognition we can recognize that the existence of all creations is only allowed due to the truth of His havayah, His infinite existence.

When one is beginning to surround this perception, it is called ohr makif, where his awareness of Hashem is called emunah (belief in Hashem). When one internalizes it, it is ohr pnimi, and it is called hakarah (recognition). In these short lines, we have written the pnimiyus, the inner depth and the truth, of all of life!!!

Moods

QUESTION

What is the proper way to view our different moods? Do our moods alternate at different times? Can a person be on a high spiritual level in which he doesn't have alternating moods?

ANSWER

Yes. Sefer HaYashar attributed to Rabbeinu Tam says that every person has times of love and times of hate, and in other sefarim, this is described as alternating periods of gadlus (expanded consciousness) and katnus (limited consciousness). It is also called ratzu (running or advancing) and shov (retreating or returning). Even when a person is normally at a high level, gadlus, he can still find himself in alternating states of ratzu (gadlus, growth) and shov (katnus, regression). But every person has movements, and changing levels from period to period, from day to day, from hour to hour, from moment to moment (there are 1080 moments in every hour). A person is always going through inner movements and he never stays the same. This point is very fundamental in understanding the design of Creation in general and the soul especially.

Unifying With Hashem

QUESTION

1) This is a clarifying question regarding how we “unify Hashem’s Name”.

Avraham figured out that we are not complete without Hashem. I gave up all internet use over a year ago and I gave up even email use before last Rosh Hashana because I was addicted, constantly checking for messages. What I learned about this is that when I felt lacking, I turned to the internet or to communicating with others to relieve this feeling of lack, and there was plenty of relief – a whole world of chats, shopping, Torah sites and more to alleviate the feeling of lack, or at least cover it over to the body’s gratification. Having been off the internet now, and turning in prayer to Hashem Who completes us, I believe that what He is asking of us for which He completes us is within my reach – to cry out. When I struggle and I turn in prayer to Him, I do not know how it will be resolved but because I have the intention of unifying His Name with everything stirring within me with His Compassion, and I declare that I do not want to fall into the body’s urges, there often is movement and release and calm that follows. I have the sense that Hashem is doing it all, through

me, that my only role is to know this and to keep crying out, that the story itself is not what matters but rather the opening I make in my heart so that the unification can take place.

If the light of our soul which is the Shechina is our inner penimius, and we become confused with a sense of independent identity based on the world completing us, seeking completion from the world, is the pathway out of that confession of our urges in this direction?

ANSWER

That is one of the ways.

QUESTION

2) If our recognition that what is within us IS the shechina – our life force – that is in its essence Hashem’s compassion only placed in a limited being, and we have genuine love for Hashem to cry out and describe it declaring our loyalty to Him that we do not want to fall into the bodily interpretations that cause us to seek being completed by taking actions in the world, is this an act of bitul?

ANSWER

Yes, that is one kind of bittul.

QUESTION

3) Is this bitul the run to Hashem that makes us ayin?

ANSWER

It is not the complete level of bittul, though it is a connection to Hashem, it is a way of “running” towards Hashem, but it is not total ayin/bittul.

QUESTION

4) And if so, does Hashem do everything else?

ANSWER

One needs to complete his actions according to what he can do.

QUESTION

5) When Hashem told Moshe to throw down the staff, it turned into a fiery snake and Moshe became scared because he could not see Hashem.

Picking a snake up by the tail is the most dangerous way to pick up a snake because it increases its length for striking. Hashem told him to pick up the snake by its tale and the staff returned to being a staff. Is this the model for us, that when we are rattled, triggered, that we cry out describing the feelings that are rattling us?

By going to this deep place of describing how our bodies feel, ready to strike, and turning to Hashem – is this the bitul that then opens our hearts so that the light of our soul that is the shechina within our inner penimi reunites with the concealed light within nature, the makif?

ANSWER

One needs to have clear recognition of his soul [to know himself well] and from there he should turn to Hashem amidst that clarity.

QUESTION

6) Does Hashem make that union when we confess?

ANSWER

Yes, but it is only partial bittul, as mentioned in a previous answer.

QUESTION

Is our effort the confession, and He makes the unification?

ANSWER

Besides for that, we also need to do actual avodah to uproot any evil parts within us [as mentioned in answer to question #4].

QUESTION

7) And then when we do mitzvahs are we making the sanctification of His Name with all of that unified light?

ANSWER

Yes, but the degree and quality of that light will change relative to the person's level.

QUESTION

8) And is this why the internet that seems to complete us by gratifying the body through the world is avoda zara, because it does not unify His Name and keeps us from being one with Him?

ANSWER

Yes! Yes! Yes!

The Solution To Unwarranted Hatred

QUESTION

Powerful clashes seem to be happening between people more and more. It seems to me that when two wills clash, the discussion reverts to bashing each other rather than constructive listening and problem solving. I think we are all seeing this. On a personal level, if a person does not wish to bash yet wants another to be less self-absorbed because the other has neglected proper respect for the first, the one who feels the lack must turn only to Hashem to complete this feeling of lack. Otherwise the one "rebuked" will simply shame or blame the first for their lack. Thus if turning to Hashem is not something people comprehend, the only alternative is to learn how to

deliver a “check” that causes the other to feel ashamed or blamed, lacking in some way, and now the discussion is on the footing of hatred rather than mutuality in serving Hashem.

- 1) Am I describing baseless hatred?
- 2) Is unifying Hashem’s Name the solution to baseless hatred?

ANSWER

- 1) Yes.
- 2) When one agrees that we are all echad (one unit) which became split into two, and that each person is really another revelation of oneness , that is the inner perspective that repairs unwarranted hatred.

Crying Vs. Emunah

QUESTION

I want to know: If a person has total emunah that everything is from Hashem, does that mean he never cries and never feels pain?

If physical pain causes a person to cry does that mean he doesn’t have emunah? Or does it least mean his emunah isn’t perfect?

Do we need to get to a point where we never cry because we have total emunah that everything is good?

ANSWER

There is no person whose emunah is perfect. Only Hashem is Perfect.

So, inevitably, a human being cries. And there are spiritual reasons that make a person cry: A person cries when he joins with the pain of the Shechinah. And that is not a lack of emunah.

Serious & Sensitive Nature

QUESTION

My nature is that I am a bit sensitive. Before I got into learning Gemara in-depth, I could easily converse with others and have a good time with them. Now I am more serious about my learning, I analyze what I learn with in-depth study, but ever since my learning has matured, I am strangely finding myself more sensitive and deeply hurt from the comments of others. Also, before I got into learning, I had a funny personality and I always had a good joke to say, and in general I had an easy time socially. But now I feel like I can't talk as quickly as I used to, and I also feel like my friendships aren't as strong as they used to be. I feel like my most of my conversations with others are too superficial and not 'real' conversations, and that they are just full of humor and jokes. If only I could find new friends. But at this point in my life, I can't find new friends and I am surrounded all the time by more 'external, superficial' kinds of people that I can't really have serious conversations with. This problem has caused a lot of imbalance to come upon my neshamah. I feel depressed, because I had always wanted to live with more meaning and more deeply, with more Torah in my life, but on the other hand it has made me very depressed because I can't connect that much to those around me. And when I feel that distance from others, I become really depressed.

Can the Rav explain what is happening to me and how I can continue to live a more internal kind of life while staying connected with friends even though they are more external and superficial than I am? And can the Rav explain to me why I have suddenly become so much more sensitive to the comments that others make to me, and how I can change how I feel about this? Thank you to the Rav from the depths of my heart, for all of the guidance.

ANSWER

With the more you get into your learning, learning with iyun (in-depth analysis), the more you are entering into the "inner world", which is a serious, level-headed place to

be in, and which is the very opposite of light-headedness (kalus hadaas). When people are light-headed, when they have kalus hadaas and they aren't serious, they will have a lifestyle of being funny, humorous, and joking most of the time, etc.

You can try to start off your conversations with something funny, but it should also be something that contains depth, thinking, which carries weight and importance to it. This is the balance between inner depth and the world of light-headedness and humor. It is the first step that's part of a greater process.

Receiving Love

QUESTION

What is the way to view the pleasure that comes from the love that we get from others? Do we need to imagine that it's really Hashem's love coming to us through the agent of a human being? For example if someone gives you a hug or a kiss and it makes you feel loved, does that mean that you need to feel how it's really Hashem who is giving you that pleasurable feeling? Do we need to see the person as a messenger of Hashem who was sent from Hashem to give us the pleasure of feeling loved, or do we need to see the pleasure as coming to us entirely from Hashem?

ANSWER

The feeling of pleasure is coming to you from Hashem by way of the messenger who gives it to you, and as a result one should feel gratitude to the One who sent him this pleasure as well as the messenger of Hashem (the person) who gave it to him.



Questions in all spheres of life in general and the *nefesh* in particular are welcome in the Q&A system and will be transferred to the Rav, *Shlita*

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